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THE FRENCH REPUBLIC, 1870-1935



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THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

1870-1935

by

JACQUES BAINVILLE



Translated from the French by

HAMISH MILES

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTORY NOTE	7
PREFACE	11
I. THE FOURTH OF SEPTEMBER	17
II. CONSTITUTIONAL MONARCHY DISGUISED	36
III. THE SIXTEENTH OF MAY	50
IV. GAMBETTA AND JULES GRÉVY	70
V. THE MISTAKE OF JULES FERRY	85
VI. BOULANGER	102
VII. PANAMA	122
VIII. THE SAFE HARBOUR?	145
IX. THE DREYFUS REVOLUTION	162
X. WALDECK-ROUSSEAU, COMBES, DELCASSÉ	187
XI. THE BRAKE ON CATASTROPHE	206
XII. THE TEST OF WAR	226
XIII. THE INSTINCT OF SELF-PRESERVATION	236
XIV. THE SLOPING PATH	244
INDEX	251

ILLI
QUÆ MIHI
DULCEM DOMUM
FECIT
D.

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

THIS translation of *La Troisième République* was in course of preparation when the news came of Jacques Bainville's death in Paris, on 9th February 1936. His survey of the history and character of the Third French Republic, from 1870 down almost to the close of Bainville's life, was his last book but one. The last of all, *Les Dictateurs*, a brief and brilliant study of dictatorship as a recurrent phenomenon in history, ancient and modern, will also appear in English. That these two books were written at all, and written with such sureness of touch and cogency of exposition, is in itself a measure of Bainville's character, of the courage and conviction which, wedded to his art and scholarship, made him conspicuous as a historian for whom history was not simply a search for objective truth, but a living instrument for the understanding and handling of living men and their societies. An honourable measure: because these books were achieved by a dying man. For many months he and his friends had known it. In March 1935 Jacques Bainville was elected to fill the *fauteuil* in the French Academy left vacant by the death of Raymond Poincaré. The date of his ceremonial reception there was advanced, lest it might no longer be possible for the Academy thus to honour him, or for him to accept an honour that he appreciated. But, sustained by a spiritual courage that never faltered, he went through

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

the ceremony, and delivered, as is customary, a discourse fastidious in matter and manner, which betrayed nothing of the approaching silence.

Bainville was fifty-seven, exactly to the day, when he died. Born on 9th February 1879, at Vincennes, he came of a family rooted in the peasantry of Lorraine, but of Parisian acclimatisation for the best part of a century. He was educated at the Lycée Henri iv in Paris, and a residence in Germany thereafter prepared him for his first book, published in his early twenties, a portrait of Ludwig II of Bavaria. It was to some extent this early confrontation with German ideas which so acted on his vivid consciousness of French nationality that his inherited Republicanism was turned into a reasoned, but very intense, zeal for the cause of monarchy in France. And the rest of his life was spent in fighting, with his own weapons of scholarship and journalistic controversy, for the Royalist cause. That impassioned belief in the French monarchic tradition, with its corollary that a different form of government must hold inborn faults of form and function, coloured much that he wrote. Coloured it, yes: but did not really distort his vision or his presentation. He was nearly always a polemist; but he fought with fairness, a decent regard for honourable opposition, a fine sense of historic irony which saved him from the extravagance of crude partisanship.

When *L'Action Française*, the organ of the Royalist movement, first appeared as a daily newspaper in 1908, Bainville became a regular contributor. He had a quick and penetrating eye for the intricacies, and the strong undercurrents, of foreign affairs, and almost without a

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

break until his physical strength had to be economised, he wrote short but always illuminating notes on the changing scene abroad. Those brief articles had nearly always a savour peculiar to himself: nearly always he drew his moral by an apt historical analogy from times distant or recent; they bore invariably the stamp of knowledge and historic perspective. And it was that same faculty which served him so well in the historical or biographical works to which he gave his less hurried hours: in these, very effectively, he could make the past live, and draw fresh illumination from history, by linking it up with the world as we, or our fathers, have seen it.

How effective that gift was, the wide circulation of his *History of France* showed instantaneously on its publication in 1926. The view which colours that long and admirable survey of French national development is in many respects the view of a small minority; but the book was accepted, and has remained so, by the mass of educated Frenchmen as the best general history of its kind published in this generation. It cannot have failed to leave its impress on the consciousness of his contemporaries and their successors. And perhaps it was with this in mind that his friend and collaborator, Charles Maurras, said Bainville's death was not a grief to his party alone, but *un deuil de l'Etat*.

This is not the place to consider all of his writings. They included works of detailed political history, such as *Le Coup d'Agadir et la Question d'Orient*, of more generalised history, such as his *Histoire de Deux Peuples* or *Les Conséquences Politiques de la Paix*, biographies such as

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

his admirable *Napoleon*, and the delightful *Jaco et Lori*, a highly polished philosophical tale in the eighteenth-century mode. And it would be wrong to omit mention of his foundation and editorship of the monthly *Revue Universelle*. His life was enviably crowded, varied, and effectual. And none who knew him, however slightly, is likely to forget the sense of disciplined vitality and intelligence that came from his slight frame and delicate features, the charm of his dry, ironic smile, or the play and precision of his swift words.

HAMISH MILES.

PREFACE

Is it legitimate to write the history of the Third French Republic as one might write that of one of the republics of antiquity? Is it possible to survey what has taken place in France from 4th September 1870, up to our own times, in the same way that one might the history of Megara or Selinus twenty-five centuries ago? The answer will be that the writer must first ask himself whether he is capable of this feat of detachment.

We have at least made the attempt, without flattering ourselves that we have produced one of those narratives which are termed impartial. Impartiality consists of doing justice to everybody. An explanatory narrative sets out to show why *this* was done or happened, rather than *that*.

It may be urged that there is no great difference, and that the second method is fully as subjective as the first. Furthermore, interpretation is part and parcel of any story. Even if contemporary France were to us a *nomen incorporeale* like ancient Megara, we should still have to choose a point of view in order to show the sequence of events; and an author can always be accused of prejudice in the selection of his point of view.

We are bound to say that our own seems to us purely naturalistic.

This Third Republic is now in its sixty-sixth year.

PREFACE

The First and Second were both short-lived. In several countries we have seen republican regimes come to an end no less speedily through dictatorships of various kinds. In France, notwithstanding a powerful monarchical tradition, the Republic has not only persisted, but has even retained the forms which it originally received. It has not, up to the present, been accompanied by a social revolution. In fact, it shows this very rare combination of democracy and liberty, an amalgam which is doubtless unstable, as it has broken up so quickly, in France at earlier dates, and elsewhere in our own time. Two generations have had their day, and France has still the same institutions. Social conditions have certainly altered, but less so than elsewhere, and political conditions, so far, have scarcely changed. France continues to unite the republican regime with the parliamentary regime, which were held to be irreconcilable, an impossibility: as witness the constitution of the United States, the authors of which shared the general belief that a choice must be made between one and the other. Indeed, a parliamentary system does not really exist in the United States, because Congress cannot overthrow the Government.

So it does not seem wrong to say that the Third Republic offers an exceptional case of self-preservation. How does that come about? How did it happen? What have been the causes of, and factors in, this longevity? To what, or to whom, is it attributable? These are the questions which our narrative seeks to answer.

Obviously the present book will present only a general survey, a summary. Besides, the history of the Third

PREFACE

Republic is only beginning to be really known up to the date at which Gabriel Hanotaux's great *Histoire de la France Contemporaine* breaks off. Beyond that hardly more than the husk is visible, and it is probably necessary to endorse the remark made by Jean Dietz in his valuable biography of Jules Ferry, that we shall lack the key to many matters so long as the proceedings of the Masonic bodies remain unpublished. As regards chronology and detail, the student may profitably turn to two works conceived in widely different spirits, Robert David's *La Troisième République*, and the contribution of Charles Seignobos in Lavisse's *Histoire de France Contemporaine*.

In conclusion, it should be pointed out that we have intentionally counted the presidencies starting from MacMahon's septennate, the term of office of Thiers being prior to the Constitution of 1875.

J. B.

1935.

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC
1870-1935

CHAPTER I

THE FOURTH OF SEPTEMBER

ON Sunday, 4th September 1870, the French people learned of the disaster of Sedan, from a proclamation of the ministerial Council presided over by the Comte de Palikao. The Emperor was a prisoner. The Empire was crumbling. What was to be done? Would a Republic be declared?

The Chamber had already been deliberating during the night. Jules Favre, Gambetta, and twenty-five other deputies of the Left were pressing for the deposition of Louis Napoleon Bonaparte and his dynasty, and for the Assembly to nominate a 'commission of government.' At that moment even the Republicans did not think it possible to step beyond legality. It seemed that power, having fallen into abeyance, must pass into the hands of the national representatives, the product of universal suffrage, just as it had been taken up by the Legislative Body in 1814 and 1815.

So widespread was this conviction that the search for a compromise occupied the whole morning of 4th September. At a quarter-past one, when the session was opened, Palikao proposed a 'council of government and national defence,' with himself as its head. The scheme mentioned neither Emperor nor Regency. It simply

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

bore the signature 'Eugénie.' The concession was important, although inadequate.

Thiers took advantage of it. Acting as mediator between Palikao and Jules Favre, for whose motion he declared his own preference, he declared in the interest of unity that the question of deposition should be held over. At the request of several deputies of the Right, he omitted the words 'In view of the abeyance of power . . .' which appeared in his original draft, and substituted the intentionally vague phrase: 'In view of the circumstances. . . .' In virtue of these 'circumstances' Thiers, supported by forty-seven colleagues, proposed a 'commission of government and national defence,' nominated by the Chamber, with a promise to summon a Constituent Assembly as soon as 'circumstances' might allow. One can feel Thiers hesitating before the unknown.

The Assembly, then, felt well assured that it was wielding power, and was controlling the situation. The offices were examining the three motions submitted to it when the crowd, massed on the Place de la Concorde, invaded the Palais Bourbon demanding a declaration that the Empire was overthrown.

And whom do we find at this moment urging order, calm, moderation, a 'solemn silence'? Who implores the 'citizens' to await the outcome of the present deliberations and to have confidence in their representatives? It was Gambetta, standing on the tribune apparently deaf to the cries of 'Long live the Republic!' And it was the invaders who did not listen to him. To placate them, he resolved on a declaration of his own that

THE FOURTH OF SEPTEMBER

Louis Napoleon Bonaparte and his dynasty had for ever ceased to reign in France. 'What about the Republic! Proclaim the Republic!' came back the angry voices, and were answered ambiguously by Jules Favre: 'It is not here that we must proclaim the Republic.' One Peyrouton, a deputy of the Left, insisted on it being done there and then. Jules Favre still objected and retorted: 'It must be at the Hôtel de Ville. We'll go there all together.' This was the means of liberating the Chamber and putting an end to the profanation of the 'Assembly,' and of avoiding revolutionary measures adopted under mob law. Gambetta grasped Favre's idea and associated himself with it. Both of them, at the head of the crowd, led it to the Hôtel de Ville.

Thiers and those deputies who were left behind at the Palais Bourbon then decided to resume work on their text, and put back the words, 'In view of the abeyance of power. . . .' They still believed that the incident was of small moment, and were preparing to settle matters with those of their colleagues who had gone to the Hôtel de Ville, when they learned that a Provisional Government had just been set up there, 'by popular acclamation,' it was said, but actually under threats of rioting. Jules Favre brought them the news and asked for their ratification. A few protested, but were calmed by Thiers, who advised them to bow to a *fait accompli* and to 'withdraw with dignity.' The Legislative Body faded away. It was a revolution.

These episodes of 4th September show that Thiers, Jules Favre, and even Gambetta, were in no hurry to found the Republic. It is true that Thiers, at that

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

moment, was still perhaps a supporter of the House of Orleans. Be that as it may, he joined hands with the leaders of the Left in order to put the brake on. Why? Because he shared their doubt as to whether France was ready to accept the republican regime.

They all remembered that on 8th May, only four months before, a plebiscite had given the Emperor 7,336,000 votes of support, against an opposition of only 1,560,000. The failures of Imperial policy, Mexico, Sadowa, the Prussian menace, had not affected the country as a whole. The Baudin affair and the *Lanterne* articles of Henri Rochefort had made a great stir in Paris, but hardly a ripple in the provinces. Even in the capital the 'No' votes had hardly beaten the 'Yes' votes by more than 50,000. No doubt the 'circumstances' had greatly changed. Disaster and invasion had intervened. The collapse of the Empire was glaringly obvious. The Emperor had handed over his sword to the enemy, and the Empress had left the Tuileries in a cab. The throne was emphatically 'vacant.' But there was nothing to lead one to believe that France would ratify a return to a Republic imposed by violence. For there had been a rising against the Legislative Body, which was first invaded and then treated as non-existent. And the political minds of the Left feared civil war.

Not that they feared a Bonapartist reaction. The prestige of the Second Empire was obliterated by Sedan. Its impartial historian, Pierre de la Gorce, remarks that Napoleon III could still have saved a spark of the Imperial legend had he attempted a heroic escape, and his defeat proved as overwhelming as Waterloo; it

THE FOURTH OF SEPTEMBER

would have been even more epic if he himself had there died a noble death. He would have sent eighty thousand men to their graves, and the idea horrified him. Pierre de la Gorce is right. With the passage of time a blood-stained, deadly Neronian catastrophe would have taken on an aspect of sublimity. Napoleon III yielded in order to spare human lives, and gave himself up through goodness of heart, in fatalistic resignation, as an expiation. Sedan became the name of an inglorious disaster. The 'shameful surrender of Sedan,' said Gambetta in his proclamation of 4th October. The phrase endured.

The Republican partisans, to whom the events of 4th September gave supreme power, knew very well that nobody would rise in defence of the fallen Empire. They also knew that the Republic had a bad name, and that provincial France disliked Parisian revolutions. The more prudent men of the Left were suspicious of the enthusiasts, whom they felt to be a point of danger. They were at pains instantly to reassure the country. In order to preserve at least a semblance of legality, they emphasised the fact that their Government, which was styled that of 'national defence,' was composed of Paris deputies, and therefore was to some extent a continuation of the Legislative Assembly. Furthermore, they chose for the presidency General Trochu, 'a soldier, a Catholic, a Breton.' At the same time M. de Kératry, an Opposition deputy, but trusted by the middle classes, was placed at the head of the police.

The Fourth of September, therefore, the birthday of the Third Republic, offers a general view of the history of

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

the regime. We can see in embryo the problems which it had to solve, the ideas and interests which it had to manipulate. Had it not been for the active Republicans who forced the doors of the Palais-Bourbon, who shouted threats and made tumult outside the Hôtel de Ville, the Legislative Assembly of the Empire would have remained the trustee of power for France. To be born and to survive, the Republic needed the aid of revolutionaries. But such help compromised it by alarming the peaceable sections of the population, and so the Republic stood in equal need of moderation. From that day onward it played an instinctive game of tightrope-walking which, as time went on, became a law of its nature.

We must look further back to discern the earliest features of the parties which, in the Republic, were to be alternately in association and at odds with each other. In the Left, which formed the Opposition under the Empire, there were four currents, and even four groups far removed from total agreement. There were bourgeois elements hardly distinguishable from the Orleanists, and very close to the men of the Liberal Empire, such as Jules Favre and Ernest Picard, who possibly lacked only time to follow the example of Emile Ollivier. Alongside these came Radicals, who in some measure inclined to the opportunism which can be discerned between the lines of Gambetta's famous Belleville programme. Then there were the 'intransigents' typified by Rochefort, and lastly the Socialists, since the International Union of Working Men had already been founded. In 1869 Rochefort had stood against Jules Favre in a Paris constituency where the

THE FOURTH OF SEPTEMBER

Socialist Cantagrel was also a candidate. At the polls Favre was elected with the aid of votes from the Right, by a majority over Rochefort, in favour of whom Cantagrel had stood down. We may thus see a foreshadowing of the electoral formations of the future, the 'Bloc' and the 'Cartel.'

And to find the origin of another dividing line we must look still further back. If the Orleanists and Republicans had united in opposition to the Empire in the name of public liberty and representative institutions, Republicans and Bonapartists had in days gone by joined hands in opposing the Restoration and the July Monarchy. In its most authentic line of descent, in its purest tradition, the Republican party sprang from the Convention of Revolutionary times. It comprised both Girondins and Jacobins. It detested the treaties of 1815. Being inspired by the spirit of the French Revolution, it was both nationalistic and bellicose, which did not prevent it from being anti-militarist or from demanding the abolition of standing armies. Here again these elements will be found in the Third Republic.

This tendency, then very conspicuous, made the Republican party the war party. Had it not applauded the Crimean and Italian campaigns under Napoleon III? Its warlike reputation had much to do with alienating the support of the peaceable population, particularly in country districts. The Third Republic nearly died in its cradle because it was too warlike.

As for the Empire, a variety of mixed motives were now causing the hostility of those who had given it their electoral support in May. It had roused the persistent

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

spite of a conservative country clinging to its tranquillity, respectful of established authority because it hated change, violently disturbed in its quietude. The invasion, with all its consequences, was something for which these millions of 'Yes' votes had certainly not been given. Other wars, far from home, were a different matter. For this one, sudden and catastrophic, neither Napoleon III nor his dynasty would be forgiven. The pain and humiliation of defeat were bitterly resented. The Empire was blamed for having provoked the war and for having lost it, for bringing on the hurricane and for yielding. And now the Republican party, of which Gambetta was the soul in the Provisional Government, instantly and naturally became the party of 'the country in danger,' of the mass levy, of 'a fight to the death,' of the 'national war,' even of 'war to the last man.'

The third republican experiment which France had made since the Revolution was thereby threatened with popular disfavour. Thiers felt this, and under his breath stigmatised Gambetta as 'a raging madman,' words which later he was to hurl in open debate. Common sense was outraged by the continuation of resistance with improvised armies. Nor was that all. The ranks of these Republicans who were resuscitating the year 1792 were divided. The members of the Government of National Defence who remained in Paris were not in agreement with the delegation of Tours, whom they regarded as timid and too ready to listen to the grey-beards. Early in October they grafted Gambetta on to it so as to inject it with energy. They themselves, in Paris, were at grips with more advanced elements. The 31st

THE FOURTH OF SEPTEMBER

of October had been one of those 'days' worthy of the Revolution. For several hours the Provisional Government was held captive by rioting, by the same mob elements which had brought about the Fourth of September, and the Commune was within an ace of victory.

With the passage of years these events have taken on a heroic aspect. At the time the chief impression was one of incoherence and excitement, and it seemed absurd to resist a disciplined invader when France itself was a prey to lawlessness and confusion. The Republic had not left happy memories. Twice attempted, it had always been disruptive, and twice it had fallen into the hands of a dictator, being incapable of establishing real sovereignty. The Government which had existed since 4th September was not rehabilitating the conception of a republic.

It is not surprising, therefore, that when the country was called upon to vote on 8th February 1871, it elected a conservative Assembly. This body was no more conservative than that of 1849, elected when the blood-stained days of June were fresh in men's memory, and dissolved by the *coup d'état* of Louis Napoleon in 1851.

The Provisional Government, the mass levy, the fight to the death—none of these developments of the past five months had been done by order of the electorate. The question now placed before them was that of peace or war. The Republican party was the war party. Gambetta protested against the armistice in terms so violent that George Sand spoke of his being 'drunken with pride,' as Thiers had of 'raging madness.' On 8th February the electoral body chose peace, and to obtain it turned to the supporters of

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

the regimes which had always maintained peace—those of the two monarchies, of the Restoration and of July. The majority in the Assembly was thus composed of Legitimists and Orleanists, between whom universal suffrage did not always distinguish. In this respect the new Chamber again resembled that of 1849.

One man in particular was brought into the foreground by these elections. Twenty-six Departments had elected Adolphe Thiers, who had become the hero of a sort of plebiscite, the prophet justified, the sage who had warned the Empire against the worst mistakes. To have listened to Thiers would have warded off national disaster. Once more, in his sober old age, he had appeared as the incarnation of sound sense in contrast to the empty agitations of the bellicose. He reflected sober patriotism, bowing to the inevitable after obtaining from the conqueror all that could possibly be extracted. This multiple vote set Thiers on a lofty pedestal, marked out as the man to make peace and govern the country. It was reasonably certain that France, groping for guidance, would listen to him. The form of government approved by him would be approved by the middle class, which idolised Thiers and saw in him its own reflected image. He himself desired only a dictatorship by 'persuasion.' But a dictatorship it was; and it was a highly personal power which he was to exercise. The first step taken by the Assembly gathered at Bordeaux was to appoint Thiers as head of the Executive Power, that is to say, head of the State.

Was Thiers at that moment a Republican? He had

THE FOURTH OF SEPTEMBER

spoken hard words, none harder, of the 'vile rabble,' of the Republic condemned to turn 'to blood or to imbecility,' of the Republic, under the name of 'Marianne,' as 'a decent girl,' but with a bad habit of showing at the window things which should not be seen. But it matters little to know at what time exactly Thiers became a convert to the Republican idea. When he did, it was without reserves.

Meanwhile, with a monarchist Assembly, the *de facto* Republic, born on 4th September, was still in existence. And that Assembly would have been prevented from proclaiming a king. It would have been necessary to know who the king should be. Ever since the split of 1830, largely caused by Thiers himself, the Legitimists and the Orleanists had formed two camps. This division had already doomed the 1849 Assembly to impotence and opened the pathway to the Empire. It was now to open the path to the Republic.

But events helped also. At first it seemed as if the Republic was an impossibility on account of the Republicans themselves. Loyal to Gambetta's watchword—'War to the bitter end!'—and to that of Jules Favre—'Not one inch of our soil!'—they refused to ratify the peace preliminaries drawn up by Thiers with Bismarck. At this juncture the force which nowadays is called nationalism, in the sense of an exaggerated patriotism, was found on the Left, and this was so pronounced that the votes of Alsace had elected, almost without exception, followers of Gambetta, and Gambetta himself as well, in the certainty that this choice of representatives would make its protest overwhelming.

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

There were a hundred and seven votes against the peace, and these were given by Republicans, including the most advanced, like Louis Blanc, and the most revolutionary, like Delescluze, Millière and Félix Pyat, who were to take part in the Commune. With them, alongside Gambetta and Rochefort, stood Victor Hugo, Edgar Quinet, Ranc, Floquet, Brisson, Scheurer-Kestner, Tirard, Clemenceau, old men and young alike, the whole past and future of the Republican idea. And Gambetta proclaimed the rallying-cry of 'Revenge!' Victor Hugo was not content to prophesy merely that France, before proclaiming the United States of Europe, would regain Alsace and Lorraine. 'She will lay her hand again,' he said, 'on Trèves and Mayence, on Coblenz and Cologne, on all the left bank of the Rhine.' The atmosphere of the time can be better understood by recalling that these memories of the propagandist and militant Revolution were greeted on the Right with murmurs of protest. But one young revolutionary, Gaston Crémieux, flung an insult to the ratifiers—'A majority of rustics!' he cried.

Men like Thiers and Grévy did not need the phrase, which left its mark, to realise the situation. There was a rural majority in the Parliament; but how could it be otherwise when the mass of the country was rural? The country districts had voted in mass for peace, and would accept only a pacific form of government. That taunting cry of Gaston Crémieux was a flash of light for sagacious Republicans. It was not wasted. The rest, more passionate, did not at once discover their error.

If the elections of 1871 had sent to Bordeaux a majority

THE FOURTH OF SEPTEMBER

of Left elements, war would have reopened; and in that case the chances of the Republic were compromised for many a long year. It was already startling that the Republic should appear with the warrior countenance of the Convention, and become associated with this idea of 'revenge.' The Republicans, by their loyalty to the traditions of 1792, had alienated universal suffrage from themselves, and were still doing so. To obliterate this mistake some impressive diversion was needed.

On 18th March a revolution broke out in Paris.

What was the Commune? At its start, the movement was still an exasperated display of patriotism, a protest against this Assembly which had signed the conqueror's terms and surrendered Alsace-Lorraine. Paris rose against the humiliation of defeat, and against the monarchist, clerical, and rural majority which accepted the Treaty of Frankfurt.

If any event could by itself destroy the Republic, it seemed as if it must be this. In six months what had it given? Here, after a dogged and hopeless struggle in confusion and anarchy, came civil war, a social war in the very presence of an enemy still occupying French soil. According to the precedent of 1848, although then the events of June were much less serious, a violent reaction might be expected. Not by any miracle, but by the intelligence and action of one man, the Republic emerged all the stronger from these convulsions in Paris. That man was Thiers.

One accusation has been flung against Thiers. He has been blamed for having wilfully allowed the Com-

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

mune to gather strength so as to crush it more spectacularly, and to make a pedestal for himself out of this averted danger. It is highly improbable that Thiers calculated thus or deliberately played so risky a stake. He had grown cautious, and was neither a gambler nor an adventurer. From history, and above all from his share in the events of 1830, he had learned that the first thing to be done when Paris rose in insurrection was to avoid being caught up in it. He argued now as Henri III had done in abandoning the city to the League after the day of the barricades, as Louis XIV did when he made Versailles his residence to avoid being exposed to the chances of a new Fronde. It was likewise from Versailles that Thiers, counting on the body of the nation outside Paris, undertook to subjugate the forces of revolution.

Civil war was coming on the heels of foreign war, in the presence of the enemy. The massacre of the hostages, the incendiaries, the buildings burnt down by the Communards, this spectacle viewed by the Prussian soldiers 'from the front stalls,' horrified France. It transformed the ideas of Taine and Renan. A new Terror seemed to be at hand. The abyss was just in front. In a word, people were frightened.

And because they were frightened, they were relieved when the Commune was vanquished. The repression was terrible, and did not flinch. The Versailles army had entered Paris with drawn swords. The leaders of the insurrection were dead or in flight, Delescluze and Dombrowski killed in the fighting, Millièvre and Rigault summarily executed. Mass arrests continued after the

THE FOURTH OF SEPTEMBER

crushing of the movement. The military tribunals gave death sentences; Rossel and Ferré were shot; Rochefort was sent to Nouméa; thousands of guilty or suspects were in gaol or penal prisons. Never, perhaps, had France seen sedition more sternly punished. The revolutionary party, thus exterminated, ceased to be a danger, and this gave promise of an undisturbed Republic. What king or emperor had restored order so energetically and finally as this small, spectacled, frock-coated man to whom the Assembly had given executive power? And how could it be urged, after this ferocious struggle, that the Republic meant anarchy? In its defence of the social order it had surpassed the regimes of authority. Thiers had freed it from the charge of abetting disorder, and from now onwards it was something more reassuring than alarming.

And for the second time its internal contradiction was resolved. The Commune had been smouldering ever since 4th September. As early as 31st October it was on the point of bursting into flame. After 28th May 1876, when the insurgents fired their last cartridges in the cemetery of Père-Lachaise, the tradition of insurrection was under a ban, as the bellicose tradition had died since the silence of Gambetta in his retreat at San Sebastian. The Republic was no longer alarming. It began to assume a respectable, a reasonable, in fact 'a conservative' appearance, bestowed on it by the person of Thiers.

He himself, hitherto so guarded towards the Republic, had completely changed. A certain self-satisfaction cannot be altogether ruled out. Thiers had a keen

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

historical sense, and deeply appreciated having become the head of the French State in place of the Bourbons and the Bonapartes. He was the first man who owed his supremacy neither to an inherited name, nor to the renown of battlefields, nor to the power of bayonets. He mounted, as it were, a bourgeois throne, simply because for some years he had been the man who was always right. He was now tending to regard himself as infallible.

Whilst he fought down the Commune, he pondered. In public he declared his confidence, he strengthened men's courage, he made them certain that this revolution would be throttled. But his apprehensions were none the less considerable, and he was deeply impressed by events. Tragic though it was in Paris, the movement might spread. It soon showed signs of carrying Marseilles and Lyons in its train. And meanwhile the enemy was still occupying territory which had to be freed for cash payments raised by heavy loans. A government accepted by the nation as a whole seemed to Thiers to be a prime necessity, and at that juncture he recalled a phrase he had spoken twenty years earlier, in different circumstances, a phrase which seemed like a challenge now that men had been shooting each other down from Paris to Versailles: 'The Republic is the regime which sunders us least.' Thiers did not mean by this that under a Republic divisions must necessarily be less extensive, but that they would be less serious. He did not fear a revolt against the Republic from the extreme Right. He felt certain that, some day, the extreme Left would take arms against the monarchy.

THE FOURTH OF SEPTEMBER

He was much afraid of the Communards, hardly at all of the Chouans. In the span of forty years he counted three monarchies, that of the elder branch in 1830, that of the younger branch in 1848, and lately that of Napoleon III, which had all succumbed to street rioting. The Republican label in itself, he felt, would be enough to avert fresh convulsions by depriving revolutionaries of a pretext. This idea he expressed by the metaphor of the Republic as a regime which should canalise revolution. And if he said in this sense, 'The Republic is the regime which sunders us least,' he was quick to add that it would have to be conservative if it was to exist at all : which amounted to saying that the Republic, supported by the country because it seemed to make a disposition of revolutionary forces, would be rejected if it reverted to its origins and showed itself incapable of regular government.

The two pronouncements were not contradictory. They were complementary. But like many historic phrases they have been misinterpreted. About the first there is no uncertainty. Regarding the second, there was doubt as to the kind of conservatism which Thiers envisaged. In his own mind it meant order in the streets and respect for property, a simple, bourgeois, peasant conception, practical and common-sensical. This was the meaning of the 'moral order' which less materialistic conservatives were showing anxiety to preserve, without success. Otherwise, little obscurity remained. Thiers soon dispersed what there was by indicating the men on whose collaboration he counted in the Assembly and in the country. These, in the words of

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

his spokesman, were men of 'a middle group, numerous, intelligent, able in practical matters, of undefined shade, more or less indifferent as to the form of government, Orleanist on occasion.' Orleanism, added the same confidant, was capable of rallying to the Republic, 'provided that this were only constitutional monarchy under another name.' The Republic of Thiers was to be shaped to the proportions of an average France, the France that gave her 'Aye' to Napoleon III because the Empire promised every man the freedom to till his field, the right to hold and bequeath his property. Thiers had been as long hostile to universal suffrage as he had been to the Republic, but during the reign of Napoleon III he had observed how docile the mass of the electorate remained, provided that elementary interests were safeguarded. He could not doubt that, under a Republican regime, universal suffrage would provide the same stability.

It is no exaggeration to say that the Third Republic was conceived by one man, emerged from that man's brain, and was by him moulded in the form which it long retained. It remains to show how events collaborated with Thiers to lead France towards that conception which, notwithstanding his prestige and powers of persuasion, he had not the power to impose. The middle classes, hitherto so markedly suspicious of the Republic, doubtless fell under the influence of the man who best represented them. They agreed that if M. Thiers declared this to be the best, or the least harmful, form of government, or the form advisable in existing circumstances, then M. Thiers had good grounds for

THE FOURTH OF SEPTEMBER

saying so and should be listened to, because such a man, who had given such proofs of clear-sightedness, could not be mistaken on this major issue. It was furthermore necessary that certain conditions should be fulfilled. They were those which Thiers himself had laid down lest the Republic collapse into anarchy, or end, like its two predecessors, with a dictatorship. And these conditions did not depend on Thiers, any more than it would depend on him whether a monarchical restoration would fail.

Thus the accidental and fortuitous elements emerge from these origins. The rising of 4th September is seen to be the starting-point. Without that, no Republic. The Legislative Body, keeping affairs in its control, would have promptly made peace without prolonging a useless struggle. The war would probably have ended with Sedan, as with Waterloo, or in some way very like that. About later developments it is impossible to conjecture. But it is doubtful whether Thiers would have held power during two years. On any hypothesis he would not have exercised it with the same prestige, because there would not have been the war to the bitter end, the siege of Paris, the Commune, and all the situations and ideas which sprang therefrom. Nor would the Assembly be comparable with that of 8th February. This Assembly, with its monarchist majority, was itself essential for the foundation of an enduring and 'point of balance' Republic, according to the hint which Thiers himself gave to the Republicans when he turned to them and said: 'It will be the reward of your wisdom.'

CHAPTER II

CONSTITUTIONAL MONARCHY DISGUISED

ON 4th September 1870 a revolution had helped the Republican regime because the revolution was victorious. On 28th May 1871 another revolution had helped it further by being defeated. And this good fortune turned out to be lasting. It is not enough to say that the National Assembly set up the Republic when it proposed a restoration of monarchy. The Assembly, just because it was monarchist in feeling, was alone capable of fashioning a constitution which would enable the Republic to endure.

First it was necessary that the Restoration should fail. By urging the public interest, and the need of reorganising France and freeing the territory from foreign occupation, Thiers had diligently balked the problem of the regime. The pact of Bordeaux, concluded with the Right wing, enabled him to postpone the constitutional question until these other tasks were accomplished. Thiers could calculate that, with the help of time and the prestige won by his services, the question would not even arise again.

The Assembly listened to him. At a sign of resistance, all that was needed to restore it to docility was a threat

CONSTITUTIONAL MONARCHY DISGUISED

of resignation from Thiers. So ready was the Assembly to follow him that, having entrusted him with the executive power, it bestowed its presidency on a staunch and genuine, though cautious, Republican. In 1848 Jules Grévy had vainly opposed the election of a president by the people; he had also made a penetrating remark which he now repeated with increased force: 'I will not have a Republic which might frighten people.'

Here was a man who grasped the ideas of Thiers. These two men, set in the most important posts, were capable of influencing the undecided and vacillating sections of the Assembly, those which professed a kind of indifference to the political question so long as there was no turbulence or agitation, so long as the position of the Bank of France was satisfactory, so long as stocks were sound.

Thiers had been right in urging calmness on the Left, but he was not listened to. Gambetta was traversing France, delivering fiery speeches against the reactionary majority. The Right complained and protested. The middle groups felt uneasy and veered towards the Right. Jules Grévy had to yield his chair to the monarchist Buffet. A few days later, at a by-election, Paris elected the Left-wing radical, Barodet, who defeated Rémusat, a member of the Government, a friend of, and candidate for, the Presidency. The Assembly took fright, startled by Barodet as another Assembly had been startled in 1850 by the election of a few advanced Radicals.

This accident disturbed reckonings. Above all else, it clouded the idea that Thiers was infallible. His

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

conservative Republic was turning red, and justifying Jean-Jacques Weiss when he had denounced it as 'a stupidity.' On 24th May 1873, with the desertion of the middle groups, Thiers was overthrown, to be replaced by Marshal MacMahon. Henceforward there was a majority for the restoration of the monarchy, made still more possible by the reconciliation of the elder and younger branches of the royal house, which had been opposed to each other since the Revolution of 1830. This 'fusion,' as it was called, was all the easier because the Comte de Chambord, grandson of Charles x, had no children, and his heir, in accordance with the principle of primogeniture, was the Comte de Paris, grandson of Louis-Philippe.

It depended only on the head of the House of France whether he would be king; but this would have been on the Assembly's terms. He admitted that the monarchy should be constitutional, but did not accept a ready-made, and therefore imposed, Constitution. On this point an agreement was not inconceivable. The Comte de Chambord was asking rather less than Louis xviii, who, in 1814, had 'passed' the charter by, as it were, a gracious exercise of the royal will, which was to signify that he was not submitting to it. Without going so far as this, the Comte de Chambord cherished the idea of giving the hereditary principle precedence over the power of the elected representatives. Otherwise, he said, he would be useless; there was no need for him to be the 'lawful King of the revolution,' and without his principle admitted he would be merely 'a big lame man.' The prince's objections may be thus interpreted,

CONSTITUTIONAL MONARCHY DISGUISED

although his ideas are still subject to controversy, just as his distinction between the representative regime and the parliamentary regime was vague.

Why did not the Comte de Chambord clearly declare political reasons, instead of alleging the white standard, which honour forbade him to renounce? Some of his adherents went on their knees before him, intent on overcoming his obstinacy. No doubt he retained a sentimental feeling for his colour, which stood for the Restoration rather than the pre-Revolutionary regime; and he gave it primarily the value of a symbol. Perhaps, too, he felt that this allegory appealed to men's imaginations better than any speech could do. He roused other sentiments, and powerful ones, in favour of the tricolour, which the Duc d'Aumale had lately called 'that beloved flag.' The prince who was almost Henri v persisted, complaining that not even his friends understood him. But the ruling tone in the Assembly was Orleanist, that is to say, the majority therein envisaged a monarchy on the 1830 model. But although they were monarchist, they were not sufficiently so to accept a king who did not admit that he owed his throne to them. Hatred of the Empire made them distrustful of all personal power. Furthermore, and perhaps without knowing it, the Assembly was subject to the influence of Thiers, who appealed to its conservative instincts, constantly reminding it that for a century past the authoritarian regimes had ended with revolution and barricades. It was a dread of civil war, of guns 'going off by themselves' for the tricolour. After the letter of 27th October, in which the Comte de Chambord stood

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

by what he had said of his emblem, the breach between the prince and the Assembly was complete, and the road lay open before the Republic, which thus, a second time, had been saved by luck.

The story of these six months is referred to in books as the checkmating of monarchy. But the majority which declared its opposition to Thiers on 24th May had not become Republican. It reserved the right to accomplish later with the Comte de Paris what it had failed to do with the Comte de Chambord, and even found in its Orleanism a reason for clinging to monarchy—a reason which seems strange to us, but which had considerable force in it. These men were attached to the parliamentary regime, but believed it to be incompatible with the Republic. They envisaged it only with the safeguard of a king. They felt that the tribune should lean upon the throne, the throne itself being limited by a constitution. They would have been incredulous if they had been told that after sixty years of a Republic, parliamentary rule would still be surviving. It is true that they were themselves about to take the steps necessary for the survival of both, when the dukes, the great bourgeois, and the great landowners would long have ceased to control the Assemblies.

We may wonder what the Republic would have been like if it had been fashioned by Republicans instead of by Monarchists. The pure Republican doctrine called for a single Assembly, on the model of the Convention, from which would emerge, and with which would be absorbed, all powers, with neither a head of the State

CONSTITUTIONAL MONARCHY DISGUISED

nor an upper Chamber, with neither brake nor regulator. Nobody can say exactly what constitutional laws the men of the Left would have given to the Republic. What remains certain is, that only the men of the Right, imbued with principles of a monarchy combined with a parliamentary system, could conceive the Constitution of 1875.

It was then remarked by Louis-Philippe's grandson, by the Comte de Paris in person: 'If we cannot make a monarchy, we must make something as like to it as possible.' This was just what furnished the Third Republic, so far as could be done, with the elements which had been lacking in the first two, namely, equilibrium, consistency, and solidity.

The majority hesitated for some time before organising the Republican regime, and made up its mind at last through fear of worse to come. Time was passing. The constituent power of the Assembly was the more open to dispute as it was not being employed. The Republicans called for a dissolution in order that the country itself should declare its views on the form of government. The Bonapartists were claiming an appeal to the people so as to restore the authority compromised by the parliamentarians. Cæsarism and revolution were the twin bugbears of the majority, and an equal dread of each of these dangers forced them to a decision.

If the Assembly had dispersed and left the task of framing a constitution to its successor, the path would certainly have been open to adventuring. It is quite possible that elections like those of 1876 would have produced a singularly hazardous constitutional body.

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

It is also highly probable that a Republic loyal to the principles of pure democracy would inevitably have been unstable, anarchic, and short-lived, leading to a collapse of the type of the Eighteenth of Brumaire or the Second of December. A Constitution harmonised with the republican doctrine was bound to provide for only one chamber. Jules Simon, for all his moderation, exclaimed that never, in any circumstances, would he accept a second Chamber unless it sprang from universal suffrage. The cautious Jules Grévy himself had stuck to his principles of 1848, and would not hear of a presidency or a senate. Yet Grévy was to succeed MacMahon, and Simon was to become a senator. When the Republic fell into the hands of the Republicans, it was again lucky to find a house furnished to hold a constitutional king. The National Assembly had given it the institutions of a parliamentary monarchy.

The Monarchists had said that they would make a restoration, even by majority vote, and in 1873 they would certainly have mustered a few more votes. By an ironic chance, on 30th January 1875, one vote, one single vote, secured the passage of the famous Wallon amendment which recognised the Republic and, in a few uninspiring words, declared that this was henceforth the form of France's government.

Chance had willed it—and the memory of this has survived—that the Republic should be voted into being by one vote. For lack of that vote, however, the monarchy would not have been secured: not, at least, unless the agreement between the Assembly and the Comte de Chambord, broken fifteen months earlier, had been

CONSTITUTIONAL MONARCHY DISGUISED

re-established. The positions of each camp were now too firmly defined. It thus came about that the Assembly would have dispersed without providing the country with a government, and it is unlikely that this confession of impotence would have raised the conservatives in the general esteem. It was primarily this consideration, together with the fear of disorder or of a Bonapartist *coup*, which decided the middle groups, who held the controlling influence, to join forces with the Left. Here was the revenge of Thiers. His calculations had come to pass.

Those monarchists who had resigned themselves to founding the Republic, and who in any case did not intend to make it permanent, had to overcome many scruples to reach this point. And to give their support to the only Republic agreeable to the conservatives, the Republicans had to pass over objections no less manifold. The true Republican sectaries had to be implored to sacrifice their tenets. If Louis Blanc and the extreme Left group, shrunken though it was since the crushing of the Commune, had persisted in their refusal, in their opposition on grounds of principle, things might yet have altered. They resigned themselves to voting, with the chill of death in their hearts. Thus the Constitution of the Third Republic came to birth amid clashes of conscience. As many hearts were bleeding on the Left as on the Right. Joylessly conceived, this was no love-child. And for this very reason the Republic itself was bereft of its most ardent passions. Instead of rushing headlong into direct democracy, it had the good fortune, willy-nilly, of being provided with a few guardians.

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

A President, a Chamber, a Senate—these were the whole Constitution of 1875. And that trinity, under other styles, had been seen at the Restoration and in the July monarchy.

The head of the State, elected by both Assemblies, was to hold office for seven years, and was then re-eligible. Why seven years? To that figure the majority had clung. At the back of their minds had been the idea that before the seven years were over, something would have collapsed for good. They held to the notion that, if the Comte de Chambord vanished from the scene, a monarchy would again be practicable, and the grandson of Charles x did in fact die almost at the appointed date. The reserved place would then be free. It only recognised that Marshal MacMahon's succession should pass to the grandson of Louis-Philippe, for whom all the presidential powers had been calculated, and the monarchy would be in existence. And the result is that even to-day, from one septenniate to the next, the President of the French Republic occupies the place destined for the heir of Louis xiv. So well aware of this were the Left, that in 1884, when they attained a majority of their own, they inserted a new constitutional law which laid it down that the members of families which had once reigned in France should be ineligible. Moreover, the Constitution-makers of 1875, anticipating the day of proclaiming a restored monarchy, had left the door open for a revision which could be requested by the President of the Republic. But in 1884 it was decided that the Republican form of the State could no longer be called in question.

CONSTITUTIONAL MONARCHY DISGUISED

This Presidency substituted for royalty still possesses powers which it received at its inception. True, since MacMahon, no President has ventured to use the most important of these, namely, the right to dissolve the Chamber on the affirming advice of the Senate. But it is none the less true that the President, if so minded, and if he has the capacity and the personal authority, can bring power to bear upon the conduct of public affairs. He it is who chooses and names the man called upon to form a ministry, and on that choice countless consequences depend. And, above all, the institution of the Presidency, a shadow of royalty, provides some open space between the executive and the legislature. It saves the Republican regime from falling into the election of ministers by the Chamber itself. It is a fragile barrier. Democracies which lack this are exposed to excessive confusion. Finally, this 'first magistrate,' elected in some ways by seniority, and rarely a choice of popular opinion, is objectionable to none. According to gradually established custom, he emerges from the assemblies which appoint him. If he comes into conflict with these, the Parliament can always take back the powers of the chosen man, as has happened twice in different circumstances. One day of parliamentary strike suffices for that. And thus the regime has nothing to fear from the head of the State, who is not appointed by the people, as the Republicans of 1848 had wished, in their fallacious calculation.

In anticipation of a constitutional royalty, with a king kept on a short rein, the constituent body of 1875 made the Presidency something skilfully contrived to

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

leave a memory of monarchy, a vestige of sovereignty, at the head of the new Republic. In this regime of party, one man, and one alone, is set above party. If this function, a bugbear to the pure Republican, had not been created, or had been abolished, it would certainly have been perceived that such an institution had its uses. The regime would have regretted the gap. Despite argument, and despite accidents which have befallen, the regime has retained it because, in practice, it has been clear that, for all their slightness, its advantages were considerable and its disadvantages non-existent.

But the dominating part of this Constitution was the Senate. It was designed to control and moderate the power of universal suffrage. The Senate of the present day is no longer as it was created in 1875. Its powers have been truncated, and it does not now deserve the title of an Upper Chamber. The seventy-five members co-opted by the Senate for life, the 'immovables,' have disappeared. The electoral college has been slightly enlarged, in favour of the great cities. But the essential has remained: in spite of all that the old Republicans stood for, the method of election to the Senate is not direct, by universal suffrage, but by means of a restricted suffrage, in which Paris has thirty delegates and the municipal councils, even of small villages, one each. Notwithstanding its touching-up in 1884, the Senate remains what it was originally intended to be, the 'grand council of the Communes of France,' designed to perpetuate the supremacy of the rural population.

How often do our achievements take the form we

CONSTITUTIONAL MONARCHY DISGUISED

intend them to take? If the builders of the 1875 Constitution could see what their Senate has become, they would not believe their eyes. It was certainly a conservative Senate that they established, but it conserves the Republic. It is dominated by the rural element, and is fashioned in a rural image. The village, the market-town, the small urban community, there voice their material conception of order. It is rustic; and therefore it deadens movements of opinion, being almost impervious to sudden gusts of ideas, and slow to give any opening to new breezes. Everything combines to keep it always lagging behind its time. The age of eligibility is one of ripeness, when the ardours of a man's youth are left behind: a Senator must be forty years old. The senatorial electors are themselves elected by previous consultations, and therefore represent a state of mind which is already ageing and out of date. And the term is one of nine years, the whole body renewing itself in sections of one-third. Everything helps to make it a breakwater. Thus, at the outset, the Senate was already a body of the Right whilst the Chamber was one of the Left; and so it has helped to maintain the Republic on lines of moderation. Conversely, when it has happened that the Chamber moved to the Right, the Senate has still been belatedly Left, overturning or paralysing ministries. Suspicious of enthusiasm, adopting innovations only when they have been tried or tested, the Senate is the very soul of the provinces, and consistently regards Paris as the city of revolution because it is the city of change. The Senate, in the Palais de Luxembourg, is seldom in perfect accord with the Chamber

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

in the Palais-Bourbon; with the city administration of Paris at the Hôtel de Ville, scarcely ever. The ruling idea of senatorial policy, perhaps, is to think the opposite of what Paris thinks.

All in all, the Constitution of 1875 was the least harmful that a Republic could be endowed with. It was not so much a Constitution as a collection of constitutional laws, having neither rigidity, nor solemnity, nor doctrine, but offering the advantage of providing the regime with organs capable of shielding it against excesses. This was one more unexpected stroke of fortune, so much so that at last the Republicans recognised their own luck. After voting unwillingly, after jeering at, and even attacking, this 'Orleanist' Constitution, they protected it as a precious possession. And those elements in it which had most offended them, proved to be precisely those which were to enable them to traverse times of restlessness and tragedy, and even war itself, the strain of which it was not believed that the regime could bear.

The Constitution-makers of 1875 had rendered the Republic acceptable by stripping it of its revolutionary aspects, and given it vital powers by endowing it with certain fairly well-balanced forces. What Thiers had conceived, they had fashioned, and by the name of Thiers it was recommended. The leap in the dark and the social upheaval, hitherto implied, were avoided. Its most glaring faults were mitigated by the transitional phase of MacMahon's tenure of office, and corrected by measures of careful moderation, or concealed by trustworthy guarantors. In fact, it was made to take its place

CONSTITUTIONAL MONARCHY DISGUISED

in the administrative framework given to France by the First Consul, in those institutions of the Year VIII, which every regime since 1814 had preserved. This legacy also the Republic inherited. Clad in so many bourgeois colourings, it conformed with the wishes of Jules Grévy, and was no longer frightening to anyone. And the men of the Right were not believed, their 'bogey' was laughed at, when they urged the peril of 'radicalism' and wanted to convince the country that their constitutional laws, transferred to the hands of real Republicans, would become tools for making revolution. And in point of fact, the revolution proved to be imperceptible, so much was its pace slowed down, thanks to the circumstances of the regime's inception, and thanks to the precautions taken by the Conservatives of the Assembly.

CHAPTER III

THE SIXTEENTH OF MAY

IT was estimated by Thiers that the Republicans in France numbered only a million and a half. In 1848 that number of votes had been cast against Louis Napoleon Bonaparte, and they had mustered again to say 'No' to the Empire on 8th May 1870. Thiers did not think this number had increased, and agreed that out of nine million electors it was a small one. In his eyes this minority represented a corps of ideas and action. Too few to impose extreme views, it was still strong enough, he believed, to overturn any non-Republican regime at a given moment. We have already noted that this was the sense of his phrase about 'the regime that sunders us least.'

Such were the effective forces on which the Republic could reckon. In spite of the encouraging results of by-elections since 1871, and of the progress made through public habituation, the Left did not blind itself to the fact that the country still had to be won over. Leaning on its traditional forces, the Right was still powerful. In its hands were the Senate and the Presidency of the new State. It was therefore necessary to go to the polls with such arguments as might rally the great mass of undecided citizens to this nucleus of one and a half

THE SIXTEENTH OF MAY

million convinced Republicans. It was necessary to address the voters in the language which they wished to hear, and at the same time to discredit the Conservatives without alarming the placid sections of the population.

This was no simple task. Already it implied what was called Opportunism, demanding that the appeal to democratic feeling should be tempered by argument aimed at reassuring, and even enlisting, the well-to-do. This was brought to pass by the growing collaboration between Gambetta and Thiers. These men were so unlike as to find some difficulty in mutual understanding; but now, in spite of their reciprocal antipathy, they became complementary to each other.

Gambetta had radiance, and had in his hands the task of warm-blooded agitation, the function of animating crowds—in the strict sense of the word, demagogy. His instinct helped him when he displayed the future to those ‘new layers’ of society from which he himself was sprung. He appealed to the hearts of Frenchmen through their passion for equality, and aimed successfully at winning the rising generation. He knew how to talk to the young. On the other hand, he sounded the anti-clerical note loudly, driving the Catholic forces of France into the camp of ‘reaction,’ and associating the battle for the Republic with the fight against the ‘priest party.’ Essentially, Gambetta was uttering again, in different words, the old and tried battle-cry of 1830 and the July monarchy, of the Second Empire and the First—‘No peers and no priests!’ But Gambetta was careful not to bring property and inheritance into question. He had purged his former programme of everything that had a

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

revolutionary or fighting ring to the ears of the owning classes. So nothing was said which would displease the bourgeois or the peasant.

Gambetta's words ran across the country like wildfire. The contribution of Thiers seemed to have been subtler, and to his alert mind the Republican party owed the double arrow which was to wound the Right so grievously. Thiers had reflected long and fully upon the conditions of life of the Republican regime, and he had a keen polemical sense. He had seen at once that the Republic was doomed if it were associated with revolution and war. He had said that it would be conservative if it existed at all, and peace is no minor aspect of conservatism. It was for this reason that the 'raging madness' of Gambetta had so profoundly angered him. The problem now was to deprive the monarchists of a monopoly of order and peace. Success depended on that, and could be gained only if the charge of fomenting disorder and war were turned back upon the partisans of monarchy.

As regards the first point, it was enough to invoke respect for the established regime, which has already lent strength to the Second Empire and, until Sedan, had absolved all the sins of Napoleon III. The voting of a republican Constitution produced a *fait accompli*, exactly as the *coup* of 2nd December 1851 had done. It became a simple matter to argue that the Right wing parties, still cherishing hopes of a monarchy, were now the revolutionaries, because they stood for a change in the form of government which could only be brought about by overturning the established order and threatened

THE SIXTEENTH OF MAY

fresh upheavals. In this connection it was enough to develop before the population of voters the arguments which Thiers was previously using in the National Assembly, and to repeat that tranquillity and safety for France could be found only through the Republic.

It called for more ingenuity to transfer the damaging accusation of belligerency from the Left to the Right. If any charge could be levelled against the majority in the Assembly, it was one of an excessive fondness for peace. It was they who had ratified the armistice and the Treaty of Frankfurt, as Thiers had done, and at the urging of Thiers, because reason demanded it. They had been greatly blamed for the immolation of Alsace-Lorraine. With honest patriotism they had thereupon joined with the Republicans in taking the necessary action for national defence. Nevertheless, in 1872, Thiers had had to press strongly to secure the passage of the law instituting the five years military service. The charge of militarism could not be sustained against the Right. It was an improbability, and nobody at that moment would have maintained it. It was likewise impossible to find the Conservatives at fault regarding peace. In the spring of 1875 war had come very near again. Bismarck, thinking that France was rising again too quickly, had thoughts of 'breaking her back.' Decazes, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, carefully avoided provocation, and averted the peril by appealing to the Emperor of Russia and to Queen Victoria. Thiers himself could not have done better. And if the incident proved anything, it was that the monarchies of other countries stood alongside the French Conservatives for

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

the prevention of war. Moreover, at that juncture Bismarck consistently regarded Gambetta as the symbol of France's 'revenge,' and was apprehensive of his coming into power. Decazes had been so tactful, so very careful not to annoy Bismarck, and the government to which he belonged had on this occasion made so little electoral capital out of the circumstances—to do so would have been incautious from the point of view of foreign policy—that the public scarcely realised this averted disaster and the service rendered by the government.

If the Right was to be shown as the war party, something had to be invented: and it had to be something fairly plausible.

In renouncing all ideas of 'revenge,' Thiers went further than anyone. Even in his riper years he had been bellicose; in 1866 he had denounced the rise and the ambitions of Prussia, and called for French intervention to check them. But after the Prussian victories, and after his conflicts with Bismarck, he believed that only one attitude was now possible for France: to come to an understanding with the victors, and to avoid at any cost a conflict with the formidable power which the defeat of France had raised up. Thiers, as things turned out, was to found a school of thought. All supporters of the agreement with Germany would have been justified in claiming Thiers as their man, and if they did not, it was because that was not openly declared and because Thiers himself had concealed his deeper thoughts. But having become the counsellor of the Republicans, the sagacious old man persuaded them that their success

THE SIXTEENTH OF MAY

depended on their ceasing to identify themselves with the idea of revenge. It is not too rash to suppose that Gambetta was shaped by the lessons of Thiers. In any case, he understood; and in proclaiming the Republican idea he muted his trumpet.

The Left were thus freed from the baleful memories of the mass levy and the doctrine of war to the bitter end. It still remained to burden the Right with the capital charge of being the war party. The responsibility of Napoleon III and the Empress Eugénie was not a reason. No body was less suspect of Bonapartism than the National Assembly, which held personal power in such detestation that it renounced monarchy rather than set up a king who did not acknowledge it as his source of power. In order to make it credible that the government of the Right was imperilling peace, it was essential to find a weak point and an ingenious twist.

This was provided by the Roman question. At this time the great Church question was still that of the temporal power of the Papacy. So long as Napoleon III reigned, he had protected the Holy See by checking Italian unity at the boundaries of the Papal State. Thiers himself urged the Empire to safeguard the independence of the Papacy. Only Sedan had enabled the King of Italy to get possession of Rome. Pope Pius IX protested to the world against his dispossession; priests and the faithful echoed his cry; and thus the bishops and Catholic elements in France were accused of provoking Italy, and open to suspicion of pushing France into a war for the restitution of Rome to the Pope, if

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

the Right returned to power. Bismarck, on his side, was then at loggerheads with the German Catholics, and was complaining everywhere, even in France, of Ultramontane activities which he said were directed against him. By conjuring up the temporal power, the Republican party aimed the deadliest accusations against its opponents. The monarchist cause was gravely compromised by the Papacy's assertion of its rights, with which they were inevitably associated by their loyalty to the Church.

On 30th January 1876 the senatorial elections, whilst showing a decided swing towards the Left, left the Right with a majority in the first Assembly, which was to be of great importance. On 20th February came the turn of the legislative elections. The National Assembly had retained the method of constituency polling as it existed under the Empire: another point in the Republic's favour, because this system breaks the great tides of opinion and reduces universal suffrage into small sections. In fact, there were not two 'Blocs' in violent opposition. There was even a good deal of confusion in the presentation of candidatures. The name of Marshal MacMahon, regarded as a useful recommendation, was invoked both on the Right and on the Left. Many candidates simply appealed to the established regime. Gambetta himself emphasised the reasonable character of his programme. Seats were disputed between advanced Republicans and less ardent Republicans. Men of the Right Centre found themselves in rivalry with Bonapartists. These elections did not take place in an atmosphere of battle. The Government had

THE SIXTEENTH OF MAY

not dashed headlong into the fray. So slight was its intervention that Buffet, President of the Council, did not succeed in securing his own election. And the partisans of the Republic, including important Orleanists of the well-to-do class who had rallied to the new order of government, showed moderation which sometimes looked like timorousness. And so, although the victory of the Left groups was complete, the Chamber which came into being from this consultation did not seem profoundly different from the previous Assembly. It might even be said to have been a continuation of the latter, as it was now constitutional. The axis of the majority which had voted the Constitution of 1875 was shifting, at the cost of the Right. Outwardly, at least, that was all.

It was then open to suppose that the working of the 'middle group' would be renewed. In order to obtain a temperate, safe, reasonable government, it sufficed to start once more, with the survivors of the Right Centre, what had been done with the men of the Left Centre, leaving aside the two extremes. This had been the system of concentration practised amongst conservatives resigned to the Republican regime. So sensible and natural did it appear, that MacMahon's first choice for the head of a ministry was the aged Dufaure, a Liberal of Thiers' generation and the days of Louis-Philippe, who retained several of the ministers from the previous government, particularly Decazes. His additions to it were sound bourgeois such as Léon Say, and even some Catholic Republicans like M. de Marcère.

The advanced Left wing showed discontent that a

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

Republican victory should have produced this result, and began to aspire towards a government which should be really their own. But at this moment there was no clearly cut cleft between the Left Centre and the Right Centre. They were not at war. Facing the great electorate, many Republicans had emphatically declared their conservatism, and the collaboration of these with the middle groups did not seem an absurd hypothesis. It was possible to envisage scratch majorities, without exclusions or unbridgeable gulfs—in fact, a coalescence of the centres. It was not so far from Thiers to the Duc de Broglie. And like Ferry, who was beginning to be influential, Jules Grévy had a strong bias against Gambetta and the Radicals.

It may be wondered what would have befallen if the Right had taken a stand in the situation and strictly observed the rules of the play as laid down by itself. For the Constitution-makers of 1875 were, after all, parliamentarians. They had desired a Chamber elected by universal suffrage, and imagined nothing else. It seemed that they would have to put a good face on bad elections, remembering the example of England, where the Tories, when beaten by the Whigs, prepared for a renewed majority. It would even have conformed with their policy of giving a monarchical constitution the name of Republic, if they had left matters slightly equivocal, or at least in some ambiguity. The Republic transferred to Republican hands might well make mistakes. And then, perhaps, fresh elections would have enabled the Right to resume the reins of power. But a clash soon broke out between the Right and the Left.

THE SIXTEENTH OF MAY

Instead of coming together, the two centres split apart. Men who seemed destined to collaborate stood ranged one against another. The elections had taken place in a sort of mist. And in the Chamber, very quickly, colours and camps were separate and distinct. How had the storm arisen?

In the first place, the composition of the Right wing was far from having remained the same as it had been in the National Assembly. It was not at all the reflection of the former majority. Its reduced numbers included new elements: nearly half was made up of Bonapartists, violently hostile to the Republic. Considering the National Assembly's horror of Cæsarism, the change is obvious. Temperaments and languages also were different. Legitimists and Orleanists had not the bitter anti-Republican feeling of the Bonapartists. They did not refer to the Republic in terms of scurrility. In 1871 only three deputies had stood out in protest against the vote which stigmatised Napoleon III. In 1876 the partisans of the Empire numbered seventy-five out of fewer than one hundred and sixty members of the Right wing. Excepting the traditional and resolute Royalists, all the non-Republican elements in France had voted for deputies who openly professed hatred of the Republic. This invasion of Imperialists largely contributed to put the Right into a combative mood and to provoke the events of 16th May.

The Duc de Broglie was by heredity a Liberal, and had never foreseen the day when he would be allied with Paul de Cassagnac. In his habit of mind he was closer to Thiers, Grévy, and Ferry, even perhaps to Gambetta.

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

It required a serious difference of opinion with the Left, on a highly sensitive point, to drive him into conjunction with the Bonapartists. These men, representative of the old society, had no reason for more hostility towards the 'new layers' announced by Gambetta than towards a Cæsarean democracy. They did not view it as a matter of class, of social distinction or superiority to be safeguarded. The great split was on the religious question.

From the point of view of history it is of small significance whether hostilities opened on one side or on the other. The Catholics consider that they were attacked by the anti-clericals, who in turn declare that they had to defend themselves against the Church in its craving for domination. In point of fact, the struggle arose from further away, from the depths of the past. Where, in the spiritual order, is the limit set to those rights of religion for which Gambetta professed respect? Where rise those assaults on lay society and the Republican State of which the Church was accused? Wherein is the Catholic to be distinguished from the clerical? No answer could be given to these questions, because they involved two spirits, two philosophies, almost two religions. Gambetta regarded it as criminal in the clergy to canvass votes for the Right by making use of Christian beliefs. He regarded it as natural to canvass votes for the Left with the myth of progress, progress which would lead the world to democracy and through democracy to happiness. Gambetta summed it all up in the war-cry which he borrowed, realising its range and effectiveness, from an obscure man: 'Clericalism—there is the

THE SIXTEENTH OF MAY

enemy!' That enemy was the rival for governance of minds. On that reef all the combinations of politics were shattered.

After Dufaure, the Marshal tried Jules Simon. He was an ex-revolutionary turned moderate, a smooth-tongued man of empty promises, well imbued with the idea of conciliating the majority in the Chamber with MacMahon and the Senate. It was he who turned to the Left and said, 'I am profoundly Republican': and immediately turning towards the Right, added, 'and profoundly Conservative.' This represented one last attempt at prolonging the conservative Republic of Thiers, but it collapsed before the attacks of the Radicals, which stiffened the opposition of the Right. Leaning on its small surviving majority in the Senate, the Right assumed the defensive, and then definite resistance. Rather than follow them, the Republican Centre moved towards the Radicals.

And thus the hopes of conciliation faded away. At one moment some members of the Right had thought that it would be well to encourage the experiment of a Left government, whose mistakes and excesses would produce a sharp reaction. The conservative elements were startled by the advance of radicalism. Everything seemed to be endangered—the moral order, religion, society. Temperaments clashed, Marshal MacMahon felt that he had duties not only towards those who, in the other Assembly, had placed him in power, but towards France as a whole. The Constitution gave him formal rights. To prevent Gambetta and the Radicals from reaching power became in his eyes a

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

matter of conscience. Even the men of the Right Centre held it necessary that he should use such means as he still possessed 'before all was lost.' This executive power and a majority in the Senate were ready to hand. So all that was needed was to dissolve this Chamber and appeal to the universal suffrage.

Was the famous Sixteenth of May an attack on the Constitution? In no respect. On that day, using his constitutional powers, and being in disagreement with Jules Simon, MacMahon obliged the premier to resign. He then called upon Broglie to form a ministry, which failed to secure the confidence of the Chamber, by a vote of 363 against 158. Whereupon, with the Senate's assent, the Marshal declared a dissolution. As events were to prove, this was not a happy idea. It was also ill-conceived, as ingenuous as could be, and in certain respects frivolous. It was far from being criminal. Indeed, it was so fully legal that even the victorious Republicans abandoned the idea of bringing any charges against MacMahon or his ministers. They were content to 'deliver them to the verdict of the national conscience.'

The name of the Sixteenth of May has survived, although the dissolution did not take place until a month later. What was it, then? An ambiguous political manipulation. Of Bonapartist inspiration, it was accepted and carried out by Liberals who had halted half-way in their constitutionalism. To these Liberals, reared in horror of the Second of December, the idea of a *coup d'état* was obnoxious. They could not, or dared not, play the parliamentary card, pure and simple, and trust to a returning swing of the pendulum which would restore a majority

THE SIXTEENTH OF MAY

when the Left had discredited or exhausted themselves in office. They planned no recourse to force. Fundamentally their thought was confused. It comprised only a repentance of the Constitution which they had made, and the acknowledgment of an error in their calculations being based on the seven-years term of office and the anticipated collapse of 1880.

Their clumsy enterprise was foredoomed to failure. They still had the conscientious satisfaction of assuring themselves that they had respected the proper forms, rather as Charles x in 1830 had justified himself by an article of the Charter. Political sense advised against the operation. Not only did it enable the Republicans to complain of arbitrariness and violence, and to conjure up the memories of *coups d'état*, but it unified the Left groups. This offered the Republic a new chance, the third happy turn of fortune (if we count aright) since the Fourth of September.

The great fact of the Sixteenth of May was that, for the first time, the Left groups came together and formed a common front. Hitherto their complete unity had not been achieved. But from that day the 363 Republicans, of every shade, combined. M. de Marcère was to be seen presiding, with the assistance of Floquet and Louis Blanc. Revolutionaries and moderates could no longer be distinguished. The *Journal des Débats* and *Le Temps* struck the same note as the most radical organs, and used the same weapons against 'reaction.' The password became 'No enemies on the Left.' For the Republican defence, there was only one battle to be engaged. The

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

wealthy classes, sheltering behind the name of Thiers, stood in the front rank. And in the end it was agreed upon that no candidate of the Left should be opposed to any of the 363, and this discipline was respected.

On the Right, however, the Imperialists, the Legitimists, the Orleanists, and the MacMahon Constitution-alists were on dubious terms. Their coalition was a product of chance. In their inmost hearts, many parliamentarians of the old majority had scruples. The Duc de Broglie himself, who shared control of the movements with Fourtou, the man of action with Bonapartist feelings, was not without anxiety. The Comte de Paris and the Duc d'Aumale did not conceal their discontent and hostility. Was not success likely to bring about a restoration of the Empire rather than a parliamentary monarchy? Is not a military *coup d'état* the natural sequence to a *coup d'état* in the realm of law? This dubiety weighed heavily on the party of order, breaking the unity and the momentum of the Republican camp.

A few weeks before the elections Thiers died. His death only furthered the cause. His funeral procession marked the union of the Republicans. Gambetta had theatrically made public his reconciliation with the illustrious old man, on the day when the dissolved Chamber acclaimed the 'liberation of the French soil.' And now this name, venerated by the respectable classes, was rallying even the revolutionaries, and more than one of the Communards became tolerant towards 'the executioner.' From his grave Thiers was showering upon the Republic as many blessings as he had done in his lifetime.

THE SIXTEENTH OF MAY

With an adversary so straightforward as MacMahon, and another so unsympathetic to dictatorship as Broglie, it could not be said that the Republic was in any grave peril. Nevertheless, the Right had the support of the Marshal's prestige, the renewed public notice of the Empire, the prefects, the civil service, the clergy. The struggle was such that, out of the 363 only 325 returned. But in this struggle the steel of the Republican party was tempered. They too staked their whole resources. Weapons were needed, and they fell back, with still louder voices, on the arguments which had already made their mark in the previous year, forcing the Right, the ministry, the Marshal himself, to deny the charge of being 'the priests' government,' to disprove the damaging and perfidious charge of being the 'war party'—for now it was being openly said that a clerical victory would mean war with Germany and Italy. 'France,' as the Duc de Broglie said after his defeat, 'was being intimidated by threats from abroad.' The prime measure of electoral virtue was the issue of 'peace.'

Finally, for this battle, the Republican party needed solid frameworks. It had them. The previous year had already tested their strength. There was Freemasonry. There was also Protestant society. The Republic could not, any more than other regimes, dispense with scaffolding, with a nucleus of thought and will; otherwise it would simply have collapsed. One is inclined sometimes to exaggerate the importance of the Freemasons, sometimes to deny their influence. The truth probably lies half-way between the two. Secret societies are not all-powerful: if they were, it would be too simple. But the

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

development of Republican politics shows a certain continuity, as well as programmes, plans, and passwords, which would be inexplicable if everything were left to the chance gusts of popular feeling and the unconscious.

Meanwhile, at the height of the battle against the Right, merged with that against the Church, and whilst the working classes, the middle classes, and the wealthy financiers and manufacturers were all fighting side by side, certain far-sighted spirits were watching over the destinies of the Republic, with thoughts for the morrow. The Republic had to win: this was essential. It must not be swamped in a victory too glaringly red. The Republic's prolonged avoidance of deadly mistakes, its correction of serious failings, and its remarkable instinct of self-preservation would all be hard to explain or understand, if it had not originally had the tradition of caution. It was the tradition of Thiers, and of Grévy, the man who declared he would have nothing to do with a Republic that frightened people. For that very reason Jules Grévy was at pains to rein in the Radicals. He was still suspicious of Gambetta. It was also against Gambetta and against radicalism that the Marshal had aimed the action of 16th May. He had exchanged, as it were, a silent signal with his adversary when, on the death of Thiers, Jules Grévy received the presidency of the Republican Union. Grévy continued to represent a 'safe' Republic, to stand bail for public order, keeping 'the tribune' at a safe distance from power. Gambetta felt the weight of suspicion pressing on him, and he in his turn gave the necessary promise, the concession of Opportunism: 'We shall be prudent.' Since 4th September

THE SIXTEENTH OF MAY

the problem had been constantly present, in the same terms. The aspirations of democracy had to be met without threatening the country with upheaval; feelings and interests had to be manipulated whilst a programme at once radical enough and conservative enough had to be maintained.

On the night of 14th October 1877 the party of 'moral order' realised that it was beaten. The strategy had failed. The whole efforts of the Right had deprived the Left of only about fifty seats, although three and a half million voters had responded to the appeal of the social authorities and the episcopate. The country contained a sure body of resistance against any subversive force. The measured phrases of the democratic leaders had not disposed of the distrust raised by the alliance of all the Left groups, including even those of the deepest red, and the political brains of the Republican party drew the conclusion that to move too fast would be imprudent. The existence of this imposing minority behind the Right made precautions obligatory. Was it even certain that MacMahon would not decide on a real *coup d'état*? He was being pushed in that direction. Generals were proffering him aid. And it was to a general, Rochebouët, that he turned to form a ministry when the Duc de Broglie resigned. For a few days the Republicans lived in a state of alarm. Jules Grévy showed them the horrors of civil war, and calmed them. He, and many others with him, would have bowed to force if the Marshal had been the type of man to cross the Rubicon. But why, and for whom, would he take that step? The Comte de Chambord was too far away, and the Comte de Paris

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

had not even approved the Sixteenth of May. There had been moves made for the son of Napoleon III, and Sedan made the Empire an impossibility, even with this youthful claimant. MacMahon himself had no thoughts of dictatorship. Even if his ambition had turned him towards that, which it did not, he was too old. It sufficed that the Chamber refused to come to terms with the ministry he had appointed, and after a few days General Rochebouët, like a truly obedient soldier, went as he had come.

But the alarm had been striking. It left the Republican majority resolved not to abuse its victory, and to play for time. This, once again, was a sound move in the interests of the Republic. Despite the Sixteenth of May, despite his rebuff, despite his flirtations with ideas of resistance, or even of a *coup d'état*, the Marshal-President retained his prestige. He still relied upon the Senate. Violent conflict with these two powers meant for the third—the risk of raising doubts about the achievement of 1875, the laboriously established Constitution. Gambetta himself had promised to be careful. Instead of forcing an issue, recourse was had to Dufaure, with a Liberal, Moderate, Conservative ministry, the only one acceptable to the Marshal. After all the shouting, the Sixteenth of May was ending with a truce.

Better still, with festivity. From the point of view of the Left, which had pressed for it, the great Paris Exhibition of 1878 was a remarkable idea of governmental policy. It offered a gauge for the returning tide of prosperity. Trade was flourishing. Luxury and enjoy-

THE SIXTEENTH OF MAY

ment were reviving. This Exhibition was the image and echo of that held in 1867: it was also like the Empire in the Empire's palmy days. The Republic was assuming the aspect of a normal, accepted regime, harmonising with the needs of society, violating neither its principles nor its habits. Under the Republicans' Republic life went on just as under the Conservative's Republic. Those who had dreaded it were becoming used to it, and took heart from the example of these wealthy middle classes, these captains of banking and industry who had boldly rallied to it. And those who still sulked, the 'reactionaries,' were saying to each other, 'What are you grumbling about? Is this "revolution"? You must admit that things aren't going too badly. . . .'

CHAPTER IV

GAMBETTA AND JULES GRÉVY

IT was hardly noticed that the Republic was in the hands of the Republicans. Democracy was dancing attendance. A full year went by in the 'handling of the business.' The main question was merely one of great railway schemes, and of loans. A few voices were raised against the squandering of funds, but speculators and bankers had reason for satisfaction. The country remained wealthy, industrious, and thrifty. Loan issues had the same success as those for the freeing of occupied territory in the days of the National Assembly. No doubts as to the soundness of Government stock troubled the minds of its holders. The Stock Exchange flourished. Occasionally there were accidents and crashes. That which befell the Union Générale was to be a defeat for Catholic finance, overcome in a new Sixteenth of May. Ordinary finance was satisfied with the Republic. Like the investors, it was becoming used to the idea that political upheavals were superficial and that radicalism was an ineffective bogey, or at least a 'demon with whom an understanding could be reached. The wet-blankets and pessimists who professed alarm at the plans for expenditure, the deficit, the piling up of millions upon millions, were simply a laughing-stock. They were wrong, being right too soon.

GAMBETTA AND JULES GRÉVY

A kind of political truce served to keep the regime itself headed in a middle-class Conservative direction. By tacit agreement the Dufaure ministry was prorogued until the partial renewal of the composition of the Senate, the elections for which took place on 5th January 1879. As expected by the Republicans, the polling caused the disappearance of the majority therein held by the Right. Once again there were two powers against one, this time against that of the President. During the campaign of the Sixteenth of May, Gambetta had insisted that the Marshal should either yield or resign. It was not worth while shouting so loud. With dignity MacMahon withdrew, winning respect as he did so, after simply declining to approve with his signature the compulsory retirement of several generals, his comrades in arms. His seven-years' term was not completed. The six years of his presidency had in all ways turned out favourable to the Republic. He was one of the men, and not the least of them, who had acclimatised it.

Nevertheless his experiment of the Sixteenth of May dealt a blow at the Presidential function. MacMahon had not exceeded his powers; he had used rights which the Constitution granted him, and acted in accordance with the ideas of the authors of this Constitution which intended that the President, replacing and anticipating a king, should hold a substantial portion of authority. As MacMahon had used this against the Left, the mere word 'dissolution' took on a factious character. At all events the word ceased to be truly republican, and the Marshal's successors have been intimidated thereby right down to our own days. In effect, one prerogative

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

of the Presidency broke down. The institution survived, but was attenuated. The Republic had no more to fear from the head of the State, which was comforting to the sulking democrats. It was deprived also of part of the services which he could render. Thus imperceptibly was the Constitution of 1875 altered. One of the counter-weights arranged to regulate the legislative power was lessened. Ways and means for assuring the omnipotence of the Chamber were made possible, which the Constitution had wished to avoid. In the long run the regime itself proved the sufferer.

The man elected in the Marshal's stead gave the Republicans every possible reassurance. The Republic, it seemed, could not have made a better choice than that of Jules Grévy. He had not been even the supporter of a presidency, which was a vestige of royalty repugnant to the tradition of democracy, and it has already been mentioned that in 1848, just as if he had foreseen the *coup d'état* of 2nd December 1851, he had tried to warn the Second Republic against the perils of the excessive elevation of one individual. From Jules Grévy no sort of *coup d'état* was to be feared. His Republican loyalty was above suspicion. Besides, he stood for the moderation, the common sense, the caution of the middle classes. To a great extent he was a continuation of Thiers. His name ratified the sense of security. It was the name which the Republic could not fear, and through which the Republic did not spread fear. Later he was thrown overboard; his election was regarded as a mistake. But at first it was a matter for congratulation to the regime.

GAMBETTA AND JULES GRÉVY

Appearances notwithstanding, it was not so far from Grévy to MacMahon. Their sentiments, and their codes, were not the same; nor did their ways of acting bear much resemblance. But they had in common a detestation of Gambetta, and aloofness towards the Radicals. The old soldier, brusque and incapable of dissimulation, had never granted an audience to the leader of the Left; and this the former barrister granted, with a lavish show of cordiality. He had it in his mind to break Gambetta. Grévy's intention was to achieve a Sixteenth of May on his own model, silently and unobtrusively, without the help of a Fourtou or anybody else—and to make it successful.

The election of Jules Grévy was the work of the Senate, which with its new majority was Left Centre in feeling, that is to say, less advanced than the Chamber. The Upper House was fitting in with its definition: it acted as a brake on the downward slope. At that moment it reflected the spirit of Thiers when Thiers himself had disappeared, already outmoded. The Senate had hastened to put forward the candidature of Jules Grévy in order to block the election of Gambetta as President. In vain did Gambetta elaborate the themes of Opportunism, which consisted of 'spreading out' questions so as not to cause any upset. He did not succeed in banishing the anxieties of the elders. Not until he had matured did he manage to convince them. They had used him to overcome the Right, and they were afraid lest he compromise this victory.

In defence and in attack they had known 'no enemies on the Left.' They had joined hands with the most

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

revolutionary elements. They were now fearful lest the Left should become dangerous to the regime by provoking a reaction. The Republic belonged to the Republicans, and its most jealous custodians knew that the Republican party had merely a tradition of 'negative discipline and resistance,' a past history of 'struggle, opposition, and conspiracy,' and that these gave it a 'sociological infirmity.' Littré used these phrases in 1880. This impulsion, as he also wrote, prevented the Republican party 'from placing itself on a level with the general function which it has inherited, and from feeling that it will retain the mastery in France only in so far as it retains mastery over itself.' This was the language of a Positivist philosopher. Jules Grévy could not have expressed as much in words, but he translated it into action.

Already Gambetta had asked of the National Assembly: 'What sort of Republic is it which proposes to stem the tide of democracy?' The Radical, Floquet, in his turn noted with bitterness how the Republicans, as soon as they came into power, were afraid for themselves and strove to attain conciliatory support from those against whom they had lately been fighting. Floquet did not understand that, for the safety of the regime, it was a question of not slipping into unadulterated democracy, socialism, and revolution. This was the idea in the mind of the new President. After his election, Grévy prepared a message which would not have been disapproved by MacMahon's ministers. Jules Grévy promised again a 'liberal and truly conservative policy.' He was a Conservative in his own way, but certainly a Conservative.

GAMBETTA AND JULES GRÉVY

The Dufaure ministry was merely reshuffled, with a well-known Protestant, Waddington, now at its head. Another Protestant, Freycinet, was to succeed him. All these men were wealthy. They formed an aristocracy of their own, with the 16th Arrondissement as their Faubourg Saint-Germain. The only innovation was the appointment of Jules Ferry to the Ministry of Education. The governance of minds was thus given to a well-behaved bourgeois, intimate with the well-known Madame Arnaud de l'Ariège, whose *salon* made her one of the great ladies of the Republic. Ferry was a safe law-abider, moderate in all things, except on one point: he saw himself charged to 'save France from the Catholic grip.'

The method had long been planned beforehand. Clericalism was handed over as a pasture for the Republican party; material interests were kept intact. This was the keynote of the new septenniate, the personal contribution of Jules Grévy. With the local magnate of Mont-sous-Vaudrey, the regime became completely bourgeois. Idealism was scorned, or abandoned to fanatics to squabble over. Demagoguery inspired horror. Money was everything.

There had been a moment when Gambetta hoped that MacMahon would summon him to office, and he had made the first moves. His Marseilles speech in January 1878 was a model of moderation. 'I fear the intoxication of success,' he exclaimed, and added that the Republican party ought to prepare itself to take office. 'For my own part, as I have always said, I am a Government man, not an Opposition man.' MacMahon had not

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

responded to these advances, and now Gambetta was meeting with a different form of hostility ; ostracism persisted. He was the man whose aid is accepted only when battles must be fought. Elected to the presidency of the Chamber as a consolation prize, and shelved thus in honorific harmlessness, he tried to force his way through to power. Sometimes he reiterated the views of Jules Grévy, attacking the spirit of recklessness, and counselling common sense. Sometimes he contrasted this materialistic Republic with the Athenian Republic, with the idea of a government superior to party, devoted to great national questions, to foreign affairs, to the army. He championed the 'ticket' (*scrutin de liste*) system of voting, better calculated than the other, he urged, to raise political debate to a worthy plane.

Such fertile inventiveness and versatility, and such ambitions, however generous, made him a suspect figure to the elders, and he was accused of wielding an 'occult power,' of aspiring to dictatorship, of inciting war. He was wounded, and turned towards the Left. He added to his programme a revision of the Constitution, the restriction of the Senate's powers, an income-tax, the purchase of the railways, and all 'democratic reforms.' He thus became once more the dangerous demagogue, and was again denounced.

Whatever he did, he was disturbing. He it was who would not suffer the Mentor in the Elysée, watching lest the Republic fall into the hands of the headstrong. As for clericalism, 'the enemy,' its destruction did not now require Gambetta. That role escaped his grasp,

GAMBETTA AND JULES GRÉVY

and another was chosen for the task which he had reserved for himself. The education laws of Ferry removed the schools from the hands of the Church, and deprived the original agitator against 'priests' government' of his platform. Gambetta had been forestalled, and so seemed less sectarian, whilst a cold, violent resentment from the Catholics of France was turned against his rival.

Three lines inserted in the law of 1879 regarding secondary education, three lines passed by Grévy and the moderates of the ministry, were to rend asunder the Republican party and the country. Article 7, denying the right of teaching to unauthorised religious orders, was the trumpet-call for warfare on religious belief. Ferry's ironic manner added insult to persecution. With a dilettantist precision he sheltered himself behind an ordinance of Charles x, and with corresponding correctness the Prefect of Police, Andrieux, supervised the expulsions, 'wearing dove-grey gloves.' Article 7, resisted in the Senate by Jules Simon, raised an unprecedented wave of emotion, which left long memories behind it, and fastened on its sponsor an aversion which was soon to be merged in crushing unpopularity.

Article 7 had carried the day. By decree the Jesuits were expelled from their houses: just as under Louis xv, said Jules Ferry. He attacked clericalism at the fountain-head. The Republic took on the task of forming the minds of young Frenchmen. And what sort of new generations were to be formed by 'the Godless school'? An orator of the Right, where the Catholic tradition was eloquently defended, prophesied the making of a young generation who would believe in nothing—not

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

even in the anti-clericals. Jules Ferry was convinced that secular schools would give democracy a lofty morality. Grévy, for his part, cared for none of these things: neither for spiritual issues, nor even for the 'social axioms' of France, which he regarded as indestructible. He was content to let men think what they chose.

Famed for his skill at billiards, Grévy regarded politics as a series of tricky shots. And now, embittered and angry, Gambetta took up his stand on the Left. Instantly Jules Grévy gauged the mistake made by the 'tribune.' The elections of 1881 were drawing near. Gambetta found that things had advanced already ahead of himself. A candidate in Paris, he was doggedly opposed by Rochefort, who had been amnestied, and he recognised that his popularity with the fighting Republicans had waned. At Charonne his voice was overwhelmed by roars and insults, and to the 'drunken slaves' he could only hurl the phrases of a demagogue himself at grips with demagogy. He added words no less famous, which perhaps held a secret meaning: 'I shall know how to find you, even in the depths of your dens!' The phrase was meaningless, or else it alluded to a police plot directed from a distance by powerful opponents.

Barely elected in Paris, Gambetta found the provinces rallying to him. Thus it had always been: Paris changing the fashion when the country was adopting it. The 1881 elections were strongly Republican, rather too much so for moderate tastes. If the Right was still retreating, the Centre was impaired in strength, and the

GAMBETTA AND JULES GRÉVY

extreme Left was moving forward. Floquet made Gambetta seem pale, and Floquet seemed pale beside the intransigence of Clemenceau. These were the factors in the game which Jules Grévy was determined to play in order to eliminate Gambetta, who was this time the outstanding choice by universal suffrage, his group being numerically the strongest. For that reason he was all the more strongly accused of having sought a plebiscite and of standing forward as a dictator.

His hour could not be averted. The question was how to abbreviate it after so long postponing it.

After being Minister of Education in the previous Cabinets, Jules Ferry had become President of the Council in September 1880. On 10th November 1881 he was overthrown, and, it has been said, was cast out for having given Tunisia to France. In point of fact, it was circumstances which led him into colonial politics. He was obliged, as things turned out, to develop them in a way which was encouraged by Bismarck as a diversion, with the hidden hope of embroiling France with Italy over Tunis. This project was denounced by those Republicans who had neither accepted the Treaty of Frankfurt nor denounced the lost provinces. But far-flung and dangerous expeditions alarmed the mass of the rural population. The fall of Jules Ferry was not mere accident. To the regime 'Ferryism' was to be no less dangerous than 'Gambettaism.' Jules Ferry discerned this too late.

His attention was fixed on contriving a check for the man he wished to ruin. It was essential that Gambetta should undergo the ordeal of office. It was brief. Gam-

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

betta provoked his speedy fall by the mere fact of the hopes centred in him, an episode which would be repeated whenever a 'great ministry' was announced. To start with, the biggest men refused participation. To leave this rival in a vacuum, Ferry and Freycinet needed no instigation from Grévy. Consular themselves, they were not inclined to work for the glory of another consul. The 'great ministry' shrank to small stature, and became a sharing-out of portfolios 'amongst pals.' The phrase was Gambetta's, who affected jauntiness and was quick to drop into triviality. The list of ministers which he submitted to the President was greeted with a scornful 'Is *that* your Ministry?' The game was up. Gambetta tried to save appearances, if nothing else. He wanted to do what so many of his successors called 'something new,' to give his Government a national complexion, to include young men, independent of the parties, for their worth and their intelligence. Side by side with 'the pals' sat Jean-Jacques Weiss, the writer who had said that the Conservative Republic was a stupidity and was appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs, and General de Miribel, chosen as head of the General Staff in spite of his reactionary reputation. Nobody took the mixture seriously. Its creator was booed. By the end of January 1882 he had left the stage, rejected over his main idea, the substitution of the ticket vote for the constituency system, that 'cracked mirror' as he called it. Electoral reform is talked of to this day: after half a century things are just where they were.

Gambetta's ministry had lasted for six weeks. The

GAMBETTA AND JULES GRÉVY

‘tribune’ whose spoken word was so effective in attack, the man of whom it was said that ‘his very guts were republican,’ the pet aversion of the Conservatives, the conqueror of MacMahon and the ‘moral order,’ was eliminated. His part was drawing to a close. Eleven months later, on 31st December 1882, he died, as the result of an accident which is still a subject of controversy. Grévy wept on one side of his face and smiled on the other, like Louis-Philippe at the funeral of Lafayette in Daumier’s drawing.

He immediately replaced Gambetta by practical men of affairs, the cautious and subtle Freycinet, accompanied by Léon Say, a financier hostile to any socialistic measures, and a pledge that both public and private money-bags need have nothing to fear. The choice was evidence that the President’s views were unaltered. Grévy persisted in holding radicalism to be a danger to the Republic. The fall of Gambetta had postponed its possible advent. The Republic as a middle-class, safe, protective, conservative institution was gathering strength. Any spiritual or religious elements, school and church, could be safely sacrificed, just as Egypt and Alsace could be renounced. The keystone was property, money. The Republic would run no risks so long as it did not interfere with money, so long as it did not rise above material interests and commonplace concerns. Grévy’s caution in this regard was short-sighted, and in time was to expose the regime to other hidden rocks. But for the moment he flattered himself on having averted maladies which might prove mortal.

The enmity with which he had harried the victor of the

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

Sixteenth of May depended on other factors. It is now clear that Gambetta was the victim of the Republicans' ingratitude. It is sometimes held astonishing that the men of his own day were not more responsive to the element of magnanimity in Gambetta, and did not give him more credit for his *sursum corda* in the days following Sedan. His legend was not yet formulated, and his history not yet simplified. The escape from besieged Paris in a balloon was one picture; but there was also the withdrawal, not to say flight, to San Sebastian, and the revelations of the inquiry into the action of the Government of National Defence left some blots on his fine page. Finally, his contemporaries had been eye-witnesses of his variability. They viewed his downfall with indifference. The pious zeal of his friends subsequently made him memorable. As Gambetta had vanished prematurely, it was believed that he had not yet shown his full measure. The gifts and vision of a statesman were attributed to him because he had not ruled. His ill-defined Republic hovered as uncertainly as his own temperament, the instability of which made Grévy so apprehensive.

To the President, the 'tribune' seemed too much of a democrat. At the same time he was not a sufficiently orthodox or staunch Republican. Not without reason did Grévy regard him as impulsive, and always inclined to extreme views. Gambetta had preached war to the last ditch, opposed the Treaty of Frankfurt, fostered the idea of revenge; vanquished by the idea of a *rapprochement* with Germany, he had rushed to another extreme. He gave a hearing to the intermediaries who drew him into

GAMBETTA AND JULES GRÉVY

secret negotiations with Bismarck, and then, on the point of visiting 'the monster' at Varzin, he had changed his mind. He was like this in all things, yielding to the influence of the moment—especially to that of his mistress, Léonie Léon—versatile, and having an Italian imagination which provided him with a series of grandiose parts to play, with the temperament of a popular tribune and inclinations towards the Consulate. Republicans of the old peasant and bourgeois stocks were naturally distrustful of this restless, attractive, and too conspicuous personage. He died at the age of forty-four. What would he have done had he lived? What mark would he have impressed on the Republic? From him sprang opportunism in affairs, sometimes of a suspected kind. From him also sprang the League of Patriots, *Déroulède*, the Boulanger agitation. He was rejected by the regime because he did not fit into the picture. In his conception and practice of politics there was something exaggerated and foreign, a *transmarina peregrinitas*. 'He distorted the machinery of the Constitution, without intending to do so, almost indeed unconsciously,' said Freycinet. He was suspected of dictatorial ambitions: and this was more than merely commonplace calumny. Instinctively the men of the soil were on their guard against him. In his day it was noticed that the Duc de Broglie, who had Italian origins in common with Gambetta, often betrayed sympathy with his youthful adversary. In our own day affinities would have been found between him and Mussolini.

The health of the Republic, according to its circum-spect guardians, needed two things. It was essential

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

that democracy should be held in check, if not pushed back, and since the victory of the Republicans this had been consistently done. And it was necessary that the Republic should be shielded against the temptation of yielding to one man. In virtue of these two rules, Gambetta had been set aside. With his disappearance, the intention was to hold a middle course, well away from the risks produced by extreme popularity, and protected from the shocks and violent reactions inherent in democracy.

CHAPTER V

THE MISTAKE OF JULES FERRY

‘A SOCIETY in which personal distinction is little valued, where mind and talent have no official prize, where high functions do not ennoble and politics become the trade of the classless and the third-rate, where the awards of life pass by preference to intrigue, to vulgarity, to charlatanism cultivating the art of advertisement, or to trickery skilfully keeping on the right side of the criminal laws. . . .’ In these terms did Renan paint the state of affairs in 1883. He accepted it, as he did not regard it as inimical to the ‘development of the spirit,’ just as other and less refined minds put up with it as not unfavourable to the preservation of well-being and the acquisition of riches. There were other needs to fill, certain idealisms to satisfy. Grévy, who misread them, and Ferry, who handled them wrongly, were to expose the Republic to the crises against which they believed they were arming it.

The disappearance of Gambetta was a great relief to them. With him radicalism did not die; but it lost its flash and vigour. Opportunism had already modified it. Now it lacked not only a leader, but unity of doctrine.

Originally the two essential points of the Radical programme had been, in foreign policy, never to allow

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

France's claim to the lost provinces to be barred by limitation, and, in home affairs, to revise the 'Orleanist' Constitution of 1875. Grévy's mind had long been made up regarding the 'revenge.' To think of it was sheer madness. He had said so as early as 1871 to the Alsatian Scheurer-Kestner: 'France must accept the existing facts and renounce Alsace.' Everything had been done to bring the Republican party to cease being the war party. As for the constitutional laws, the sages of the Republic intended them to be touched as little as possible. They were quite aware that revision was one of those doctrinal questions in which the mass of men have little interest. It therefore seemed to them that if patriotism and democracy had to be placated, if the need for activity and reform had to be satisfied, as also the sense of nationality and the spirit of change, such measures as were necessary could be taken by using a little ingenuity and dexterity, whilst avoiding steps involving heavy risks. They proceeded to seek at once compensations and counter-irritants.

Jules Ferry denied the charge that he had said, 'The danger lies on the Left'—a phrase which outraged the active Republicans. He protested that his words had been misinterpreted, that he had been considering only a momentary danger, as the Monarchist danger existed no longer. In truth, he had betrayed his real thoughts. For the struggle of the Sixteenth of May the moderates had sought the alliance of the intransigents and the revolutionaries; and this was now a burden to them. Ferry himself was too violent in tinge for Grévy, who accepted him whilst preferring Freycinet, less crabbed, or Duclerc,

THE MISTAKE OF JULES FERRY

more colourless. As long as Grévy remained in office, he kept the noisier Radicals out of power. In their name Clemenceau called for 'the Republican maximum.' And certainly republicanism was measured out in small doses.

Thus there were governments animated with secret distrust towards democracy, whose excesses they dreaded for the sake of the Republic itself. Unable to refuse everything to democracy, they worked hard to divert its currents, conceding what did not seem of great consequence. In this way the divorce was re-established. On other occasions they compounded with the demands of radicalism, and then strove to recover part of what they had been forced to grant. This is what happened as regards the reform of justice. Magistrates hostile to the regime, suspected of reaction or clericalism, were not gently treated; to facilitate a purge of the judicial body, the irremovability of judges was suspended. The Left wanted more, claiming a popular magistracy in accordance with the principles of the Revolution. It forced from the Chamber a vote in favour of the appointment of judges by election. A few months later this vote of principle, turbulently passed, was annulled. It would certainly be interesting to count up the laws which, from that day until our own, have never got beyond the stage of a first reading. The prudent and wise busied themselves ceaselessly and inconspicuously with averting any developments likely to harm the regime by exposing society to risks of material disorder. Jules Grévy had the right to say, as Jules Simon had formerly said, that he was profoundly Republican—and profoundly Con-

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

servative. When a minister alluded to the separation of Church and State, Grévy asked him sharply to say no more about such madness. The Concordat seemed to Grévy a tested instrument of government, which it would be folly to lay aside.

The Constitution itself had to be preserved, and it was Grévy and Ferry who rendered this outstanding service to the Republic. To alter essential parts of the creation of 1875, the utility of which was daily being made plain, meant in the long run calling the regime into question. To make it more republican would have compromised the future. On the other hand, it was hard to respond with blank refusal to the idea of revision, which the Left had entered at the head of their programme. This was one of its promises to democracy, one of the justifications for the Radical party in existence. Could the Republic retain an Orleanist constitution, voted in despair by Republicans because at the time they could get nothing better, and because it was open to revision, as Gambetta had stipulated? Would the victorious Monarchists have abstained from refashioning the constitutional laws which had been arranged to enable an eventual restoration? These arguments lent force to the strict Republicans' objections against the work of the National Assembly. The Left campaigns were fiery. Grévy and Ferry realised that revision was inevitable.

They entered upon it against the grain, and worked to guide and to limit the process, sacrificing only accessories, laying much stress on the new clause which made the

THE MISTAKE OF JULES FERRY

princes ineligible and on that which declared that henceforth the republican form of rule was not to be called in question. Above all, they had avoided the possibility of the two Houses in joint session at Versailles, acting as a constituent Assembly, which was the chief point. In fact, the adjustments carried out under their direction in the Congress of 1884 left the main body of the constitutional law intact. The elders had again stood guard. In vain did the extreme Left resume the fundamental heads of its doctrine. They were sidetracked as they had been in 1875. Neither the abolition of the Senate, the election of both Houses by the same suffrage, the withdrawal of the right of dissolution, nor any of the Radical party's requirements for a complete and whole-hearted democracy, was allowed a footing. The question of the Presidency was hardly even opposed, because the principle of this institution was no longer even disputed. The revisionists' gains were very small when compared with their first demands. The urban share in the composition of the senatorial electoral colleges was increased without the Senate losing its rural character. But life-Senators were abolished. The Congress resolved that the seventy-five irremovable members should disappear by a process of natural extinction, their seats being shared at the close of each session amongst the most populous Departments. With the process of co-opting vanished the last trace of aristocracy in the Upper House. More than one Republican regretted it. As Challemel-Lacour had said, the country lost a means of honouring its best citizens and of providing for some representation of the intelligent class,

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

of maintaining in the Upper Chamber a certain body of well-known men, and a certain tone. The life-Senators had included a few men of letters, scientists and philosophers, a choice which had not been misused by the co-opting body. It was only when irremovability was abolished that men noticed how this was calculated to make the Senate into a sort of vestibule for a Republican Pantheon. The thought came too late, and was a thought of repentance. True, the restricted and rural suffrage system, no less than universal suffrage, would rule out this aristocracy of mind. Those entitled to the ivory curule chair now emerged from the councils of Departments and from the farmers' organisations, not from the learned faculties, the academies, the great bodies of the State.

The level dropped still further. At this price the essentials survived. A difficult passage had been traversed without the Republic attaining its 'maximum.' For a little longer, revision still stood on the Radical programme, until the time when it was captured and compromised by the Boulanger agitation. It then ceased to have any serious status. The risk was of ruining the Constitution, at least of undermining or weakening it. All things considered, the Congress of 1884 had renewed its strength. Grévy and Ferry had kept the links with the Conservative Assembly to which the Republic owed the fact that it was capable of remaining alive. Unadulterated democracy was avoided, and radicalism defeated once more. The struggle which had begun on the Fourth of September between moderates and extremists was proceeding, and the

THE MISTAKE OF JULES FERRY

moderates gained an advantage no less important than the service which they had just rendered to the regime itself.

The memory of the difference separating the Republicans in 1870 led these political minds to another result. They remained opposed to the partisans of 'revenge' with a distrust left undiminished by the death of Gambetta, feeling that nothing was more fraught with danger than to leave the eyes of Frenchmen fixed on the gap of the Vosges. Yet they could feel a bruised fibre in the country, a desire to efface the ignominy of defeat and recover a gleam of glory. 'Failing direct vengeance,' said Freycinet, 'France wished at least to parade her arms and to show that they had not lost their strength.' The idea of reconquering Alsace and Lorraine was insensate. But on other continents there was free scope. Africa and Asia provided the national pride and restlessness, and military activity, with opportunities which seemed free from danger. The conquest of an Empire overseas was a governmental idea.

But it would be untrue to say that this was a pre-meditated policy springing from pondered calculation. Only after the event did 'colonial expansion' become a plan. The opportunities were not provoked; but they were seized when they appeared. Already, this intervention in Tunis had been shaped by circumstance. And it was circumstance which involved Ferry in the Tongking venture.

The beginnings passed unnoticed. Republic though France was, France was not consulted. The country

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

turned to the conquest of vast territories, to the foundation of colonies and protectorates, as peace and war, treaties and alliances, were made, without asking the opinion of the people, without even discussion in the Chambers except as regards credits. *Principio facto a Fabio*. The splendours of colonial history were renewed by audacious soldiers and by creators of genius. It gave the astonished nation moral support to see so much energy welling forth from itself. Thus was founded a vast Empire, and the only question now was how it should be safeguarded. The monarchical regimes were being continued on a large scale, as applied since Charles x and the landing at Algiers to reconstructing the overseas domain, of which only weak vestiges remained at the fall of Napoleon i. The creation appertains to the Third Republic. It would not be wrong to say that it does not appertain to democracy. Submitted to popular vote, it would never have been undertaken. In 1882 the question of whether France ought to intervene on a sharing basis with Britain had been settled with a negative, under the pressure of public opinion as translated by Clemenceau. The reply would have been the same for Tunisia, Tongking, and the rest, had it not been for governmental initiative, made possible by the fact that France was not an integral democracy. Here again the 1875 Constitution was useful, in that it left some independence to the executive, and even some degree of secrecy enabling it to pursue certain projects.

As a matter of fact, nobody suspected the eventual outcome of an operation planned to suppress piracy in the delta of an Asiatic river. 'It is out of the question

THE MISTAKE OF JULES FERRY

to contemplate a conquest of Tongking, which would certainly offer no great difficulties, but would be absolutely sterile.' Thus spoke Challemel-Lacour, the Foreign Minister, when moving a vote of credit; and he was doubly mistaken. Expenditure and the despatch of troops went on and on. A sense of uneasiness spread. The discontent of those who disliked seeing France dispersing her strength outside Europe, far from the unbarred frontier, mingled with the anxiety of the timid and sedentary populace. These sallies into unknown lands looked like costly adventures, like Mexico all over again. Harassed by questionings, aloof, secretive and disdainful in his answers, Jules Ferry became suspect. Things became still worse when France, for the sake of Tongking, became involved in war with China. The panic, said a witness, was no greater after Waterloo. All seemed to be lost. Ferry had already fallen when it was learned that the first telegrams had exaggerated the severity of this reverse, and that negotiations with China had resulted in preliminaries for peace. In such singular circumstances did France enter into possession of Tongking and receive the protectorate of Annam. But the blow had fallen. The name of Lang-Son, where Dugenne's column was routed, was not soon forgotten. Critical days were beginning for the Republican regime. The colonial diversion was threatening it by exposing the Republic, with Jules Ferry, to the full blast of unpopularity.

Nevertheless, if we analyse the emotions which had thus been quickened, we shall discover the reason why the Republic escaped this danger. Whose voice was it

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

which, in the sitting of 30th March 1885, hurled the famous thunderbolts under which Ferry collapsed? 'We refuse to discuss any longer with you the great interests of our country. We do not know you, we do not wish to know you. . . .' It was the voice of Georges Clemenceau, who in days gone by had stood out against the Treaty of Frankfurt and the surrender of Alsace-Lorraine, who, at Bordeaux, could not even tolerate contact with the supporters of ratification. Now, as then, he was denouncing the abandonment of national rights, the denial of sacred things. The voice that spoke through him was the voice of revenge, although he added: 'The Republic means peace.' Those who approved this blazing philippic and the vote which overthrew Ferry, were in part Conservatives and rural deputies like the men of the National Assembly. The peasantry of France did not want war in Tongking any more than elsewhere. And there lay the misunderstanding.¶

After his downfall Ferry had to leave the Chamber by a private door in order to escape the flood of anger. Paris howled at, and even ill-treated in the street, the man who had forgotten the lost provinces and whom the voice of Clemenceau charged with high treason. The villages regarded Ferry as a dangerous man, a spendthrift of millions, who sacrificed soldiers for gambles. Covered with opprobrium, his name was hated everywhere. As to the reasons for his being a reprobate there was no agreement, and that disagreement meant the salvation of the regime. But Ferry had outraged all feelings at one and the same time. The Catholics saw him as a frock-coated Diocletian, a glacial persecutor,

THE MISTAKE OF JULES FERRY

the Antichrist of Article 7 and the decrees which threw the servants of God out on to the street. In the eyes of patriots he committed another sort of impiety when he substituted Tongking and Madagascar for Alsace and Lorraine. And, finally, he startled the peasantry by proclaiming that France should spread far and wide 'her manners, her tongue, her arms, her flag, her genius.'

In this welter the election of October 1885 took place. There had been a return, without anyone knowing just why, to the system of ticket voting which had been unwelcome when advocated by Gambetta, and the voting by Departmental lists was to give fullness of scope to every movement of opinion. Moreover, the Republicans were divided between the opponents and the partisans of Jules Ferry. The Monarchists and Conservatives, having opposed the Tongking venture, again stood forth as the really pacific elements. And so the 1885 elections, like those of 1871 and 1877, were held on the question of war and peace. Nor was this all. Four years of Republican governments, with tendencies towards the Left more marked than in their predecessors, had spread discontent and uneasiness, which proves that neither the fears nor precautions of Jules Grévy were superfluous, and that there was a risk of spoiling everything by moving too fast or too far. The miniature Sedan of Lang-Son, the budget deficit, the instability of ministries, were amplified by an excess of laws, reforms, and speeches, which alarmed sections of the population which were concerned for their

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

tranquillity and had been won over to the Republic by appeals to respect for the established order. The regime was now being judged by experience.

There was a lively sense of alarm. The Right, in the first ballot, had fifty seats more than the Republicans. Without MacMahon, Broglie or Fourtou things had reverted to a Sixteenth of May. Once again, as then, a coalition of all Republicans was necessary to avert the danger. In the second ballot, Brisson, the President of the Council, rallied the forces and renewed the old password: 'There are no enemies on the Left.'

Although this coalition had recovered a majority, and even slightly increased it by invalidating as many elected Monarchists as possible, a good deal had still to be done to bring matters back to where they stood before. Frenchmen had been troubled in their pockets and their habits, and their finer feelings had been injured. Jules Ferry had unsuspectingly endangered the regime. If the Opportunists and Radicals, at the eleventh hour, had united against the common foe, it was not long before they fell once more into dissension. With a Right numbering two hundred, the Chamber was split into three hostile groups. And in the country itself a large body, which generally had voted for the Conservatives, was assuming a critical attitude. On this everything depended, and it only needed an increase in its size for the Republic to be faced with the end which had been feared, and guarded against, by the guides whose perspicacity was this time at fault.

The mistake was the share of Ferry. Jules Grévy made a mistake, or rather was allowed to make it. When his

THE MISTAKE OF JULES FERRY

seven years of office expired, he sought a new term, in spite of his seventy-eight years. His entourage urged him to the step, and they counted for nothing. Grévy, with his dignified respectability, was the captive of a family and a *milieu* which Renan unconsciously defined when he spoke, in the words quoted earlier, of the 'trickery skilfully keeping on the right side of the criminal laws.' Scandal had been hatching in the President's own household. During these strange years Ferry was introducing the ideas of Kant to the schools, and Grévy sheltered the cult of Mammon in the Elysée.

Chance played another card. Grévy was re-elected on 28th December 1885, almost with acclamation—so much was the candidature of Ferry dreaded. Loyal in his liking for Freycinet, Grévy entrusted him with the formation of a government. It happened that a War Minister was lacking. Amongst the soldiers to whom the portfolio was offered, one, Saussier, refused it in order not to have to abandon his supreme military command. The other, Campenon, pleaded his need for rest, and, to divert the insistent demands that he should accept, put up the name of General Boulanger. Freycinet remembered that in Tunisia this officer had had certain difficulties with the civil authorities. Campenon made excuses for his young colleague, assuring Freycinet that he was at heart a man of sound discipline, either because he had genuine feeling for this junior of his, or because the name had only come into his mind by accident. According to his own account, Freycinet was in a hurry to complete his ministry and accepted Boulanger on the

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

recommendation of an old soldier who had shown every sign of loyalty to the regime.

In point of fact Boulanger had other influences behind him. Politics attracted him, and, although a serving officer, he counted a number of friends in the ranks of the Left who regarded him as a staunch Republican. Holding a high infantry rank, he had made many connections. Freycinet seems to have slightly adapted his story. 'This appointment, notoriously, was suggested, if not imposed, by Clemenceau,' says the Senator Paul Strauss, a contemporary witness. And as it turned out, the new War Minister, to begin with, gave the Republic every token of fervent zeal.

Made anxious by the successes of the Right in the 1885 elections, the Republicans had just passed a law for the banishment of the eldest members of families who had reigned in France. Its pretext was a reception given by the Comte de Paris for the marriage of his daughter, Princess Amelia, with the future King of Portugal. The same law laid it down that members of these families could not enter the army, although not depriving them of the right to belong to it if they already held rank therein. On his own authority Boulanger struck the princes from the roll of officers. Charged with abuse of power, he defended himself by reading in the Chamber the army record of Henri d'Orléans, the Duc d'Aumale, who was appointed a divisional general in 1843 at the age of twenty-one. Boulanger omitted to say that this promotion was quite regular, in conformity with the existing laws of the 'citizen monarchy.' The Chamber did not look closely. It approved Bou-

THE MISTAKE OF JULES FERRY

langer's action, and ordered the public posting of his speech. On the morrow of this parliamentary triumph, at the State review on 14th July, riding a black charger, the War Minister was loudly cheered. His popularity began; songs were written about him. He became the idol of patriotic and Republican Paris. Clemenceau had not yet dropped him, and he was taken up by Rochefort.

In his early days this advocate of 'revenge,' the aspirant to dictatorship, pushed himself forward by crude platform methods. He contrived for himself lustreless triumphs at the expense of lost causes. The Conservatives railed against this uniformed demagogue, and in vengeance published a rather cringing letter which he had written six years earlier to the Duc d'Aumale. Boulanger fought a duel with a Royalist Senator in this connection. At this moment the positions were still those of 1871, even those of Fructidor: on the Right the pacific elements, and on the Left the militarists and war-mongers.

The popularity of the Republican general on his black horse had been born in Paris, that Paris which had produced the Commune against the rural and peace-ratifying elements. It was not inexplicable. Freycinet, seeking to excuse his introduction of Boulanger to the ministry, lays too much stress on chance. According to him, Bismarck had pointed out Boulanger to French patriotic sentiment. In January 1887, seeking from the Reichstag the vote of credit for increasing the German armed forces, Bismarck declared that France was preparing to attack Germany, and in order to make his allegation seem credible he added: 'Why should not

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

General Boulanger, if he attained power, try his fortune with war?' These words, in Freycinet's view, were a kind of consecration. A platform argument, a purely circumstantial hypothesis, set the minds of Frenchmen afire.

It is more accurate to say that Bismarck deliberately magnified things of which he was intuitively aware. He did not quite invent them. Fifteen years after the Treaty of Frankfurt, France still smarted with the humiliation of defeat. The voice of the recusants of 1871 was finding an echo. Clearly enough, the policy of renunciation had won the day, and Tongking and Madagascar were diversions. Above all, perhaps, it was clear that colonial expansion had isolated France, having alienated Britain, to whom Egypt was abandoned for nothing, and also Italy, who was contemplating the Triple Alliance with the Emperors in Berlin and Vienna. Meanwhile nothing had come of the attempted *rapprochement* between France and Germany. Indeed, their relations were dangerously strained. Threats of war were in the air. Bismarck seemed even to wish for it. During April 1887 it seemed to be on the point of breaking out. The incident of Pagny-sur-Moselle stirred the country deeply, and had all the appearance of a provocation. An official named Schnoebelé had been enticed into a trap, pursued, and arrested on French territory. It looked as if it had all been contrived by Bismarck to annoy France. The incident was settled with cool tempers. Jules Grévy supervised the exchange of diplomatic notes, using his own pen at certain stages. He used his talents as a jurist and his skill in

THE MISTAKE OF JULES FERRY

composition to defend the cause of France without giving any opening to the adversary. Bismarck lost his opportunity for war. And on that day the re-election of Grévy, the infallibly prudent magistrate, seemed matter for congratulation.

The peril had been seen at close quarters. The presence of a soldier in the government was reassuring. The crowd was becoming used to looking to Boulanger as to a leader. With subtlety and justice Freycinet notes: 'The figure which he cut in the public eye increased as the chances of a conflict became greater. When the crisis was over, he profited by the importance attributed to him.'

Anxious and a little irritable, national sentiment sought what form it could find. It settled on the man who coincided with itself, just as national hatred had concentrated itself on the man associated with Tongking—for Tongking had become the symbol of all the charges levelled against the regime. The Boulanger movement was born of Ferry's mistake. And Clemenceau, for his part, had not spoken in vain the word which kindles trouble and excites the mob—the word 'treason.'

CHAPTER VI

BOULANGER

ON 1st January 1887 the President gave a dinner at the Elysée. One of the guests, Edouard Millaud, then Minister for Public Works, who kept an intimate and very ingenuous diary, noticed at the head of the table a motionless and silent personage 'with flame-coloured beard and rigid bust.' This 'tailor's dummy' was called Daniel Wilson. Deputy for Indre-et-Loire, and a son-in-law of Jules Grévy, he was destined a few months later to become the centre of a very inopportune scandal. A case of bribery involving the head of the State could not have been more untimely. In this year 1887 everything seemed to work for the ruin of the Republican regime.

The Boulanger question became critical. Popularity carried the Jacobin General along, only too willingly. It was also heightened by every incident instigated by Germany, for Pagny-sur-Moselle was not the only one. Boulanger, pampered by the Left, was still Minister for War, and, when Freycinet fell, he was passed on to Goblet, a Government Radical chosen by Grévy to avoid an extreme Radical. Was it better to have Boulanger inside or outside? The risk seemed equal, and it was nearly too late when the choice had to be made.

BOULANGER

Goblet in his turn was overthrown, in the middle of May. Two weeks were spent in seeking a successor. The 'Boulanger question' became bitter. It now divided the Republicans. Some, under the leadership of Rochefort, demanded that the General should retain the portfolio for war and denounced the disgrace of his sacrifice to Bismarck by France. Others maintained that the state of tension between France and Germany made this sacrifice necessary. It happened that Le Flô, the ambassador in Russia at the time of the 1875 alarm, published documents which for the first time revealed the danger then incurred by the French people. It was seen how near war had been, what designs Bismarck had formed, what menace had hung over France. Yet contrary conclusions were drawn. Boulanger's partisans saw here one more reason for retaining the man who held the army's confidence. His adversaries saw one for excluding him, and so avoid needlessly provoking Bismarck.

Another discussion arose. Jules Grévy and Rouvier, a complaisant Opportunist whom he had summoned to form the Cabinet, received warnings to exclude the General from two dissimilar sides. Jules Ferry, in his bitter disgrace, joined with Baron de Mackau, leader of the Right groups, in urging on the Elysée this same veto. Clemenceau diagnosed the situation well when he said that the interdict with which Bismarck and Ferry struck at him made Boulanger an incarnation of patriotic sense, while the ostracism of the Royalists, who could not forgive the affair of the princes, made him the incarnation of the Republic. With all that, added Clemenceau, Boulanger was only a *coup d'état* general.

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

These discussions were dragging on without result when, on 22nd May, at a by-election in the Department of the Seine, 38,000 votes were spontaneously cast for Boulanger, who, being on the active military strength, could be neither a candidate nor eligible. This sounded the alarm. The three Republican groups of the Senate, amongst whom radicalism then had no influence, gave Jules Ferry to understand that their vote would be given to no ministry which included Boulanger.

The result of these discussions was that Rouvier, by rejecting the General and thus alienating a part of the Left, was obliged to seek the votes of the Right in order to obtain a majority in the Chamber. Ferry, and then Boulanger, magnified in stature by Ferry's mistakes and swept on by the Radicals, had caused such dissension in the Republic that, two years after the elections of 1885, when to save the regime it had needed the concerted help of all Republicans, the Government was compelled to seek the co-operation of the Monarchists. Who knows whether, before the menace of Cæsarism, some of the Left Centre did not regret the parliamentary monarchy? Had not events justified those Orleanists of the National Assembly who professed that democracy, for ever wavering between anarchy and dictatorship, is incompatible with free institutions? At any rate, in order to keep at an equal distance from the compromising Ferry and the dangerous Boulanger, the Government Republicans had to accept help from the Conservatives. It is not enough to say that the alliance seemed to take place. It took place. When the extreme Left reproached him for making terms with the Right, Rouvier, after many

BOULANGER

circumlocutions, replied that his Government was 'open,' and refused to regard this side of the Chamber as an enemy.

The union of the conservative forces, several times foreshadowed, was now within reach. It still failed on the religious question.

The Right always sacrificed everything to the service of the Church. The less fanatical Republicans, the speculative Opportunists, dared not brave the suspicion of clericalism. The Right had exacted several conditions for its co-operation—a mitigation of the Ferry laws and, as a new recruiting law for the army was being prepared, exemption from military service for all seminarists. Intimidated by the Radicals, Rouvier did not keep his promises. Futile and passionate in contradiction, Clemenceau continually incited him to break with men in league with Pope and King, with Boulanger, the would-be dictator-general, with Ferry, traitor to the highest interests of France. Clemenceau took intense pleasure in telling the largest possible number of people: 'All is finished between us.' This 'no' addressed to all at such a moment could serve but one cause, that of the factious soldier. The Right, receiving no satisfaction on issues which it deemed essential, was driven back into Opposition. It retired under 'the broken cross.'

It cannot be doubted that the Republic at this time ran very grave risks. Before the rising tide of Cæsarism she deprived herself of those who, in 1875, had established the parliamentary institution, and had really founded it, because they had surrounded it with the

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

safeguards of order, equilibrium, and stability. The Conservatives had given adequate proof of their repugnance for dictatorships. Excluded from the protection of liberalism, they were thrown back towards the General, whom they had hated more than the most genuine Republicans had hated him. Boulanger did not delay in making advances to the Right. Everything ordained this policy for him since he was attacked by those who had cherished him. The Republic herself reconciled him with the adversary, and linked the coalition with her own hands.

To what did she owe her safety? To the irresoluteness of the General, to his taste for cleverness, to the mediocrity of his character and mind, to his poverty of imagination and ideas. He was a man who took no risks, who waited for victory to come to him. Campenon, in recommending him to Freycinet, had not been so far wrong. Fundamentally, Boulanger respected discipline. Irregular methods made him really uneasy. He was even timid, so little fitted to exercise authority that he submitted to it as soon as he felt its touch.

Although he was no longer Minister for War, his popularity had waxed still greater. He was more dangerous out than in, as was discovered rather late in the day. Briefly, the Government decided to remove him from Paris by giving him command of the 13th Corps at Clermont-Ferrand. On 8th July 1887 an immense crowd went to the station to prevent Boulanger from leaving. Scenes of idolatrous enthusiasm took place. Men lay down on the track to stop the train. What did Boulanger do? Not for a moment did he think

BOULANGER

either of taking refuge in the midst of the crowd or of placing himself at its head. He could have taken it wherever he wished, but doubtless knew not where. As it was, he was merely a general officer vexed at being prevented from rejoining his unit. A clever police functionary saw his embarrassment, led him along a separate line, and made him mount a locomotive. In fact, Boulanger fled from the applause and confidence of Paris. He had not even the presence of mind to insist on a departure worthy of his post.

An observer on that day could not have failed to conclude, like the police officer Louis Lépine, whose subterfuge launched his long career, that the popular hero lacked that assurance upon which Fortune smiles. When Ferry disdainfully called him a 'comic-opera Saint-Arnaud,' the epigram had no more meaning than those which riddled Bonaparte before the Eighteenth of Brumaire and his nephew before the Second of December. It would have been better to recall a celebrated phrase and say: 'It is not Boulanger who is formidable: it is Discontent.'

The proof lies in the fact that the Boulanger movement survived this inglorious departure. Boulanger's prestige withstood everything, even ridicule. The movement, once launched, did not stop. It had not yet taken political form. It was only a state of mind, but a potent one. From the first it had claimed this War Minister whom Republican Paris loved, whom the Radicals had invented and the Opportunists expelled. Ferry became more hateful when he himself was expelled. Anyone connected with the 'Tongking man' was hissed. One

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

man, one soldier, was set up against a few hated men. That was all.

The Boulanger movement became political through that guest with the flame-coloured beard who dined silently at the end of his father-in-law's table on 1st January. In October 1887 a scandal exploded, the first, as it proved, of a long series. A regular buying and selling of decorations was discovered. A gang had put up the Legion of Honour to the highest bidder. Boulanger appreciated so little the developments and results of this event, he accused the Ministry of having provoked the scandal in order to implicate himself in the person of General Caffarel, one of his protégés, lamentably involved in the swindle. From the first steps of the inquiry, the shady agents and adventurers who procured the clients sheltered behind an influential personage. This was Daniel Wilson. The fact was irrefutable that the son-in-law of the President of the Republic sold not only the red ribbon, but rank and office as well.

What an end for Grévy! Mud had bespattered the sober statesman's house. He had been reluctant to become President of the Republic. This office was thrust upon him because it could not have been placed in more faithful hands; and the same man had become used to the inheritance of monarchical power upon which the constituents of 1875 had agreed. And through the very institution which he had called evil, declared bad for democracy, he was now smirching the Republic and placing it in dire peril.

A thrifty bourgeois, even pettily so, he did not trade

BOULANGER

on his own account. Fondness for money, excessive regard for the good things of fortune, made him far from delicate in his connections. Later, some very embarrassing ones were revealed, notably with Cornelius Herz. He had given his daughter to Wilson because Wilson was a wealthy heir. It was for this part of materialism that Grévy atoned. The vulgarity of his reign came to a head in a washing of dirty linen which could no longer be done in private.

The comic-opera failed to carry Boulanger to supreme office. It drove Grévy from it. Songs and squibs preceded the Fronde. The 'affair' of the son-in-law offered a rare blend of the ludicrous and the odious. Corruption, profit, and larceny under cover of elective mandates and official honours, the contrast between virtues proclaimed and practices discovered, all came unseasonably and fell on fertile soil. There were street demonstrations. Anger rose, and two sentiments united in favour of Boulanger. It was easy to represent that, sacrificed to Bismarck by the Opportunists, he was also the victim of the thieves or the protectors of the thieves. The Boulanger movement was becoming political. It adopted the idea of constitutional revision, and it was then seen how dangerous the attacks against the Constitution were. They took directions which the Radicals had never foreseen. They were equally capable of rendering the Republic more republican, or of ruining it. Finding fresh fuel in a rising hostility against the parliamentarians, the Boulanger agitation opposed this parliamentary system which, through Wilson, was suffering its first moral reverse.

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

The sound Republicans still felt the danger. There was a heavy burden of blame to carry, and Grévy was no longer the good counsellor, the sure guide. He seemed, in his senility, to be bent on destroying what he had so often preserved. To appease Paris it was important that he should leave the Elysée at once. He was vainly besought to abdicate. Indifferent to the public interest, he cared little whether his fault would destroy the regime. There was no longer a ministry. The crowds muttered. Men dreaded a return of the Commune, of Camélinat, of 'General' Eudes, emboldened by hopes of approaching disorder. Confusion spread everywhere. Grévy obstinately refused to resign. It was necessary to compel him, and the Chamber had to notify him that it was resolved to sit permanently until he renounced his powers. The sovereign was deposed.

Nevertheless, Grévy was regretted. 'This personification of calm, coolness—a sense of proportion—was disappearing for ever.' Freycinet was fearful of the future, afraid that with his old President the tradition of prudence would pass. And those who likewise stood by the Constitution were further stricken by the new blow which the Presidency had suffered. Diminished after MacMahon, it was in a different way diminished after Grévy. To political weakening was added moral weakening. Men were justified in wondering whether it would survive this double trial.

It is difficult to say with whom, during these troubled days, the sense of true interest for the regime took refuge. It was like an instinct of self-preservation. To

BOULANGER

have the Republican spirit did not suffice. Discernment was necessary to avoid the break-up of the Republic. There were openings for sagacious direction or for irremissible disaster. After the unexpected, almost unbelievable, disappointment caused by Jules Grévy, what was to become of the Presidency? Men inclined to regard it as an ill-fated institution. The Radicals refrained from implicating the Constitution at such a time. The question was, to elect a successor; and Jules Ferry was automatically put forward. The choice of Ferry, whose very name angered the Parisians, would have been a provocation. It was remembered that he himself had once said: 'If you resist public opinion, beware of the tendency of this country to raise its voice when its representatives turn a deaf ear.' Public opinion was against Ferry's election. His obstinacy was countered, and his supporters, no less blind than he, were discouraged.

It was necessary to find a candidate sufficiently neutral, sufficiently inconspicuous, who would be distasteful to none and at the same time offer some safeguards. The grandson of Lazare Carnot was discovered amongst the nobility of the Republic, and Clemenceau invested him on account of his mediocrity. The ancestor was decorative. The descendant, Sadi Carnot, was cold and colourless, correct and serious. He had been educated at the Ecole Polytechnique, which was gratifying. His hereditary Christian name was Sadi, which was unusual and quickened curiosity. People wondered how this Carnot could be a Persian! And, besides, it was only two years now before the centenary of 1789.

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

A reminder of the Revolution was effective. Everything was turning out quite well, the essential being the exclusion of Ferry. Moreover, the Republic had placed at her head an inoffensive man, one who did not cause anxiety. This was a great asset for critical days. The third President received from Anatole France the nickname of 'the bearded Minerva.' Minerva herself had inspired the choice.

The Opportunist Tirard, a well-known merchant in Paris, and an old campaigner in the Chamber, was Sadi Carnot's first vizier. But he had to gird up his loins for the promised battle. He had to make sure that no more mistakes would occur. Grévy's dismissal, the quick election of his successor, were quick palliatives which did not allay discontent. The Wilson corruption trial sustained indignation and revived contempt. The idea of revision, too long exploited by the Radicals, now assumed a form hostile to the parliamentary system. The new revisionists proclaimed themselves Republicans, like Boulanger, and Rochefort answered for them. But perhaps that famous 'Archer' had emptied his quiver of liberty in his battle against the Empire. By becoming crystallised in a general's name, by exhuming the idea of the plebiscite, the idea of revision was reverting to Cæsarism. Under the name of an honest and patriotic Republic, it demanded another Republic, and of Republics there are few varieties. If the national note predominated, an authoritarian note of authority was now added to it. The heads of this 'Fronde' were 'intransigents.' They came from extreme radicalism,

BOULANGER

or else, like Déroulède, originated in Gambetta, the Gambetta before the renunciation of revenge. Therein lay the original sin of the Republican party, its old bellicose tradition, and the 'appeal to the soldier,' who may be Augereau in a Fructidor, or Bonaparte in a Brumaire. It was this, too, which shattered the Boulanger movement on the day when, having assumed a definite form, it confronted the immovable mass of the rural electors.

Meanwhile, universal suffrage seemed favourable to Boulanger and encouraged him. The tactics of his supporters were to put forward the General at by-elections in different but well-chosen Departments. Every time, with impressive figures, the votes favoured the General, although he was ineligible. And at this moment the perturbed Republicans made a mistake. The enthusiasm of the electoral body alarmed them when the real danger to the Republic did not lie there at all. They had the advantage of holding Boulanger at their discretion, since he was on the active military list. Showing their fear, they committed the blunder of retiring him, that is to say, he was given the right to have a grievance, and at the same time his freedom. Thereafter, Boulanger could participate as a real candidate in elections. His election in April 1888 for the Dordogne and for the Nord recalled the success with which Louis Napoleon Bonaparte had played his prelude to Empire. In the Chamber, too, he was reminiscent of Louis Napoleon by his lame-dog bearing in the tribune. He seemed to have lost his gift of the gab during his absence from office. Speakers treated him contemptuously, and his programme admittedly con-

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

tained scarcely a word that was not borrowed from the Radicals, who had misused it. Reciting the lesson which his inspirers had taught him, he was content with the single reply that the Constitution, as was admitted by the most ardent Republicans, was bad, was responsible for the defects of the Republic, and must be refashioned. Obvious as the snare was, the Left ran into it. In their name, Pelletan called on the Government to reject revision, and to engage itself to cut short the Boulanger campaigns. Tirard saw the imprudence of this manœuvre, and refused. He was overthrown. Then Carnot called on Floquet to form a ministry. Grévy had sworn that so long as he remained at the Elysée he would never entrust power to Floquet, a name made provocative by the legendary episode of an apostrophe to the Tsar of Russia. An attempt was made to break up Boulanger through rigid radicalism. The confusion was worse confounded.

Now that we can read the recollections and admissions of several of the men who then held office, there is no room for doubt that Boulanger could have been master of the situation with a little will and energy. He lacked true ambition, and perhaps sincere conviction; he had no confidence in himself or in his star. He asked himself what neither of the two Bonapartes had ever asked: 'What shall I do when I am dictator?' He liked to be attractive, and played for popularity. He did not make use of it, and prolonged his betrothal to the crowd as if he enjoyed the thrill. And yet he had skilful advisers. His trainers, Naquet, Laguerre, Georges Thiébaud, created a situation which he had only to seize. He was

BOULANGER

offered 'days,' all ready-made. When, in the Chamber itself, following an altercation with Floquet, he resigned his seat for the Nord, in order to testify to his rupture with the parliamentary system, he was re-elected in three other Departments simultaneously. On the day of his return to the Palais-Bourbon to resume his seat, an enthusiastic crowd gathered in the Place de la Concorde. 'If Boulanger had stood up in his carriage and waved his hat to invite the crowd to follow him, I should have been swept aside and the Chamber invaded,' confessed the police official Lépine, who was keeping public order on that day. Boulanger did not give the signal. This, after the Gare de Lyon, was his second lost opportunity.

Nothing discouraged his partisans, neither his obstinacy in circumventing fortune, nor the bad omen of the wound he received in a duel with Floquet. Meanwhile discord spread amongst his opponents. Tirard was defeated over the refusal to put forward the Radicals' project for revision under pretext of checkmating plebiscitary revision. Floquet submitted a proposal for reform of the Constitution. This higher bid played right into the hands of the Boulanger faction. The guidance of the wise elders was obviously lacking.

The regime was shaken. A collapse seemed probable. The Republic had existed for eighteen years, and men were saying that neither a Restoration, nor a July Monarchy, nor a Second Empire had survived that term. So it is not surprising that the Right, renouncing its dislikes and grudges, should rally to

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

Boulanger. When the Right approached the moderates and Opportunists, and supported Rouvier in resisting the Jacobins' General, it had been repulsed. Now the Republic was governed by Floquet, that is to say, by a Radical whom Grévy himself had considered a dangerous and impossible man. On the other hand, Boulanger made advances to the Monarchists and the Princes. Despite his convictions, despite his hostility to dictatorships, the Comte de Paris no longer hesitated. Everything seemed to assert that a national movement under this Boulanger pseudonym would overthrow a regime from which, whatever they might do, the Right were excluded. It seemed to them absurd to stand aside. The alliance was reached with this General who had become 'syndic of malcontents.'

The calculation was bad, because the 'syndic' was below the level of his task. The Boulanger movement must end with a forcible stroke, or else lose itself in the sands. Boulanger was not the man for a *coup d'état*. He threw away his third chance—the best and the last. According to the tactics of his staff, a mandate being vacant in the Seine, he submitted himself to the voters of Paris. This was the supreme test. On 27th January 1889, a day of wild enthusiasm, Boulanger was returned with 244,000 votes, against 162,000 for the candidate Jacques, whom the Republicans had chosen for the same reason as Carnot, because his obscurity would offend no one. Clemenceau, in his contempt for humanity, was not always right in voting, and making others vote, 'for the stupidest candidate.'

On that evening there was nothing to prevent Bou-

BOULANGER

langer from seizing power. The crowd at the Gare de Lyon, the crowd in the Place de la Concorde, still urged him to place himself at its head and march on the Elysée. All testimonies agree here. The League of Patriots surrounded their chief, and would have encountered no resistance. The Government was not putting up a defence, perhaps because it no longer had defenders. Lépine, then a high official at the headquarters of the Paris police, again testifies: 'The Préfecture had taken no measures of precaution or protection; not a policeman on the spot or in reserve. I do not explain this, I simply state the fact. I moved amongst the crowds, helpless, embarrassed by my impotence, and the crowds were shouting with one voice: "To the Elysée!"' Freycinet confirms 'the confusion' of the Government of which he was a member, 'the shock to the guardians of public order.' At the Elysée Boulanger was expected to appear at any moment. It is said that a carriage with horses harnessed was prepared for President Carnot, round which he held an improvised council. In the confusion and alarm, 'the most extraordinary proposals were made.' But the most extraordinary thing that happened was that nothing happened at all. In a restaurant on the Place de la Madeleine, a few hundred yards from the palace where ministers and President were already proposing to leave Paris, the Boulanger staff were adjuring the great man to give the signal. With gentle obstinacy, Boulanger refused. For the third time the cock crowed. For the third time Boulanger let the moment pass. Fortune was weary. The opportunity never came again.

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

The cause of this inertia is still disputed. With some, and this is the theory of Barrès, the sacrilegious memory of the *coup d'état* of 1851, the opprobrium of the Second of December, verses from *Les Châtiments* learned in his youth, restrained him. Others believe that his obligations to the Comte de Paris hampered him. Perhaps, being at heart Republican, he really lacked courage to lay hands on the Republic. A foundation of military discipline, a long acquaintance with politics and ministerial custom, determined also perhaps his preference for lawful methods. In elections he had triumphed everywhere. Why should he not still go on and win by the same means? The plebiscite would free him from all risk, as from every promise. He trusted popular suffrage.

By deciding on the safer way he chose the more dangerous. He did not act. Others took action against him.

'Five minutes past midnight: the Boulanger tide is ebbing!' When Georges Thiébaud pronounced that famous phrase, the ministers gathered at the Elysée, where nobody had forced the doors, began to pull themselves together. The more intelligent realised that they must attack a vacillating opponent, and fluster him by a rapid and vigorous offensive. If he wished to continue the game of universal suffrage, they too would play, but with the sense of superiority given to those who hold power and know how to use it. The plan of campaign was drawn up on the spot. Legal action against the General and his lieutenants gave his movement a

BOULANGER

sedition colouring. The restoration of the constituency system of elections cut short the plebiscitary campaigns. Boulanger was challenged to win four hundred seats for his candidates or for allies of the Right in rural constituencies. A watchword ran through France: the factious soldier who conspired with the clergy, the nobility, and the Communards, could only hasten disruption, hazards and, above all, war.

To carry on this operation a subtle, not a doctrinaire, policy was needed. Nor could the Republic be saved by the sole virtue of the principles of democracy. Clemenceau, Ranc, and Joffrin had during the previous year founded the League of the Rights of Man, to confront the Patriotic League. They had prevented nothing. Nor had Floquet and radicalism saved anything either. By returning to constitutional revision in order to trick Boulanger, he was even given sustenance. A few men with political sense understood this. Eighteen days after Boulanger's election at Paris, Floquet was defeated on his proper project of constitutional revision. Even the Right and the Boulangists in the Chamber voted against him, from fear of the steps which the Congress might take. After Floquet, with Tirard, Rouvier, and Freycinet, returned the guardians of the Grévy tradition. They undertook to finish off the Boulanger affair, and to point its moral.

Constans became Minister for the Interior, a man appreciated for his sound judgment, and having a fertile and resourceful mind. Prosecutions for conspiracy against the safety of the State were part of the plan for the defence of the Republic. They might determine a

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

renewal of agitation. Boulanger was skilfully warned, thanks to Constans, that his arrest was imminent. He crossed the frontier immediately, declaring that he refused to recognise his opponents as judges. Rochefort and Dillon, also accused, likewise left France. The High Court tried them as defaulters. From that time the spell was broken. Boulanger, condemned by default to confinement in a fortress, was merely an absconding plotter. The verdict was given on 14th August 1889. At the end of July the cantonal elections marked the decline of the 'national party.' At the end of September the legislative elections were held. As an additional precaution, one of the rights of universal suffrage to which the Democrats held most firmly was suppressed: the multiple candidatures which, in 1871, had allowed Thiers to be elected in twenty-six Departments, were forbidden. These elections passed as the Government Republicans had calculated. Boulanger was nominated in the 18th Arrondissement of Paris, but his condemnation rendered the vote invalid. Only thirty-eight Boulangists were elected in the whole of France. Ferry, however, the prime cause of the jolt which the Republic had suffered, was defeated.

The reasons which had already caused the failure of the Sixteenth of May had again saved the regime. The spectre of war had produced the certain effect. The discontent was like a stream with two currents. The more violent threw back the calmer one towards the established order and towards those who were in no sense alarming. In 1885 the mass of timid and uncertain voters had favoured the Right through uneasiness. What Ferry,

BOULANGER

the colonial enterprises, and extreme radicalism had then done, the Boulanger episode, with its ideas of revenge and its conspicuously Parisian agitation, had now in its turn accomplished for the Republicans.

Boulanger's death, his suicide on the grave of a loved woman, in the cemetery of exile, was the epilogue. The comic-opera song became romantic. The ardour of Paris had cooled. But in politics also it is true to say that nothing is lost. Boulangism was vanquished. But on the course of later events it was destined to exercise an influence which was still incalculable.

CHAPTER VII

PANAMA

ONE by one the original custodians of the regime had left the stage, but their tradition did not vanish with them. There were still men ready to carry it on.

The false move from which the Republic had just extracted itself drew attention from a supervising council. France had been perturbed, a great body of the electorate deeply moved. There must be a reason for this. As the mediocrity of the General on whom public favour had fastened became more obvious, the more it had to be admitted that the movement sprang from deep levels. It had been like a fever. There was every reason to fear that the attack might be repeated in different circumstances if the same conditions were present, and nobody wanted another night like that of 27th January.

Far from yielding to the satisfaction of victory, and far perhaps from gauging its full extent, those Republicans who troubled to think were impressed by one feature under their observation. One-third of the French people refused to accept the regime. The elections which demolished the Boulanger movement had sent one hundred and seventy-two Monarchists to the Chamber, and in addition some two score 'revisionists.' This was the

PANAMA

name now assumed by the partisans of the General, lifting the idea of revision from the Radicals and giving it the sense of an appeal to the people. Confronting these opponents of the established regime, there were in the Chamber only three hundred and sixty-six authentic Republicans, three more than in the Chamber dissolved by MacMahon in 1877. This arithmetical comparison had no doubt an element of chance in it, and led to the belief that in twelve years no progress had been made. Furthermore, the survival of a strong Right opposition confronting a restless and extremist Left made for instability of ministries. In such conditions the parliamentary regime worked with difficulty, and was all the more exposed to criticism.

Nor was that all. The Boulanger crisis had produced a new classification of parties by reference to essential questions. Hitherto the Right had not been specifically national; it was even accused by the Republicans of subordinating the interests of France to those of the Church, and Ultramontanism was one of the reproaches which it had to obliterate. Honestly patriotic, the Right was not distinguished by any particular zeal for military affairs at a time when no one haggled over the credits, when the Gambetta party was the most ardent and assiduous in matters of provision for the army. Almost imperceptibly the alliance of the Right with Boulanger had altered the situation. Republicans were now suspicious of swords and epaulets. The old grudges of the Second of December were born again in them with this hatred of militarism which many of them had professed

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

under the Empire. Besides, they had not vainly fought the preacher and the idea of revenge by arguments in which the argument of ridicule was present. From that it was an easy step to a denigration of patriotism, while the Monarchists moved away from the flag whose colour had, in the past, prevented the restoration. A day was to come when the Right were accused of chauvinism, which would have been almost inconceivable to the ratifiers of the Treaty of 1871. Meanwhile there was ground for fearing that national sentiment, having raised up Boulanger and carried him along, might become the current sweeping on towards monarchy. The Republic, no doubt, had extricated itself from Boulanger by declaring that he exposed the country to war, whilst the regime was a guarantee of peace. But it had just been seen that an irritated patriotism could be stronger than the best electoral devices.

During February 1890 one incident threw a sudden light on the change which had come about. The young Duc d'Orléans, son of the Comte de Paris, had managed to enter France unrecognised, and, presenting himself at the recruiting office, asked to take his place among the conscripts of his own age. It was a bold and original method of interpreting the evolution of the Right. What had been effected by the law which exiled the princes and inflicted political ineligibility upon them? All Frenchmen were subject to compulsory military service, and two families only were exempted. The possible heir to the throne was now rejecting a privilege which many might have envied him. The shirker or deserter might be justified in saying that not everybody could be

PANAMA

descended from a ruling family. The Duc d'Orléans presented an embarrassing problem.

The clever Constans desired a prompt settlement of the matter, and was eager that this descendant of Henri iv, who wanted to eat from the mess-tin, should be formally condemned and escorted back to the frontier. The other ministers did not share this moderate view; still less did President Carnot, who made the astonishing remark that he allowed no hunting on his land, as if he had ruled by right of inheritance. The delinquent conscript, however, was pardoned after a few months of imprisonment. It was not opportune to inflict stern punishment on a would-be soldier when a deserter from barracks was brought back between two policemen. The upshot of this youthful gesture was the confirmation, in the reflective members of the Republican party, of the view that it was wrong to neglect the claims of patriotism and abandon to adversaries of the regime the defence of the national idea.

German threats had engendered the Boulanger movement. Even a summary analysis allowed of no doubt there. Nor could there be any further doubt as to the real character of the cry for revenge being, as it were, the flourish of trumpets which disguised anxiety. What was taken for bravado was only a form of public alarm. Boulanger had not merely been caracoling on a black charger, and painting blue, white, and red on the sentry-boxes, and, as Barrès said, 'pulling the soldier's top-knot higher.' His real claim to popularity lay in melinite and the Lebel rifle. He satisfied the desire to feel that the country was guarded and the nation protected.

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

This anxiety and craving for protection were heightened by the isolation of France. Ferry's enterprises had been vexatious, because it was feared that a dispersion of French forces would produce fresh foes for the country. In the past Clemenceau had sought to check intervention in Egypt by pointing to the danger of a struggle in the East, after which Germany would have held France in the hollow of her hand. Tunisia embroiled France with Egypt, and other French conquests made Britain resentful. This unsatisfactory state of foreign relations was also at the root of the Boulanger affair. France had now no more friends in Europe than she had in 1870, when Thiers knocked in vain at the doors of the chancelleries. Uneasiness was increased by the accession in Germany of a young Emperor who seemed eager to make a name for himself, without knowing how to do so, or anyone else knowing how he should. The natural conclusion was that, if quietness of mind was to be restored and the Republic shielded against a revival of despotism, it was important to reinforce the army, ensure national defence, and, if possible, overcome the pangs of solitude by making allies.

The worst that could befall the regime would have been lack of realisation of the state of affairs, and inactivity. But two things were done. In the first place, attention was paid to the army, not without some ostentation. Since 1871, admittedly, the successive Assemblies had not dealt grudgingly with this. But they were not exactly competent. An organising brain was needed. It was found. Freycinet, the collaborator of Gambetta, had seen the mass levy of 1871 at close

PANAMA

quarters, and without having altogether renounced his illusions, he no longer believed that national defence could be left to improvisation. With the aid of the army leaders he prepared it, and he was wisely allowed time to devote to the task. By a happy exception which arose from a recognised political need, Freycinet remained at the head of the War Ministry for nearly five years. When he left office, the law fixing forty-five as the age up to which Frenchmen could be called to the colours was in force, the Reserve formations were ready, the troops were equipped with the Lebel rifle, the arsenals were stocked, the higher command was organised. Other measures and reforms gave evidence of a resolve to make France capable of facing Germany boldly. The work accomplished had its shortcomings, just as there had been in the plan of public works in which, ten years earlier, Freycinet had sacrificed so much to the effect of figures. This effect was not shunned by the new organisation of the army. It helped to give an accurate general impression. The Republic had shown for military problems that concern which had made Boulanger popularly trusted.

And still more was done. The Republic soothed the strained nerves of the country. The League of Patriots wanted an alliance with Russia, the apostle of this idea being Paul Déroulède. For over two years the Russian Government had been seeking points of contact, and now more eagerness was shown in responding to these advances. Opportunities were taken of being pleasant to the Tsar. During the grand manœuvres which were a demonstration of military strength, it was announced

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

by Freycinet, who was Premier as well as being still War Minister, that France at last had a friend. The allusion was instantly understood. The agreement of 27th August, preparatory to a formal alliance, had confirmed the *entente* with the Emperor Alexander which had been foreshadowed by the visit of a French naval squadron to Cronstadt. France was no longer alone. On 10th September 1891, at a banquet attended by the foreign military attachés, Freycinet referred to 'the new situation.' Praise was given to the army, here associated with the diplomatic success. The head of the army, General Saussier, offered his thanks to the Government of the Republic. Could patriotism ask more? A few days later France held one of those reviews in which no spectacular appeal was spared. There were plentiful reminders of the 'organiser of victory,' and Paris no longer had any need to acclaim the general on the black horse. Without him, far from him, the Boulanger agitation was triumphing in the national side of what it had stood for. Nobody could say it had been quite in vain. Through it a 'perfected and fortified' army, an alliance with an Emperor who was reputed to be powerful and a people whose numbers gave an illusion of invincible strength, had both been achieved. For Boulanger, it seemed, nothing remained but to rest content in this *sic vos non vobis*. Within a fortnight after the great review at Vitry-le-François the revolver-shot at Ixelles left Boulanger dead by his own hand.

Just when the 'new situation' had been publicly announced, Jules Grévy lay dead too. He had died a second death. Men now forgot the pitiable close of his

PANAMA

Presidency, the scandal and the expulsion, and remembered the services he had rendered. Second only to Thiers, Grévy had been the man whose handling had 'acclimatised' the Republican regime in France. They recalled that skilful controlling guidance which he impressed on all around him almost without their being aware of it. His was the model to be followed, on the lines of moderation which he had charted.

Sadi Carnot had no difficulty in adopting the ideas of a Republic as correct as himself, fashioned like himself on an administrative and scientifically trained model. To the Carnots it was nearly a century since revolutions finished. When he entrusted the ministry to Freycinet in March 1890, it might have been the voice of Grévy speaking. The Government programme once more announced a Republic which was 'broad, open, tolerant, and pacific.' It seemed like the Promised Land at last. Mingling present with future, Freycinet said of it: 'It is the definite status, and the desired conclusion to the struggles which we are traversing.'

Scrutiny of the situation still gave the same result. How was the middle path of Opportunism to be maintained between an irreconcilable Right and an insistent extreme Left over-stimulated by the advent of socialism? Without the more advanced Republicans nothing could be done. But the problem remained unaltered. If too much were granted to them, there would be discontent in the country, which held to a 'pacific' regime; if they were refused everything, the support of the conscientious and active Republicans would be lost, without whom the Republic would cease to exist. Speaking of the extreme

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

Left, Freycinet formulated the method: 'We were often embarrassed by the need to placate the extreme Left without yielding to it.' These tight-rope feats always ended in the same way. The Right, as arbiters of the situation, overturned the opportunist ministries by one-day coalitions with the Radicals. And the conclusion was reached, as expressed by the engineer Freycinet in mechanical terms, that 'stability could be achieved only by the progressive elimination of the Monarchists from the Parliament.'

Would this elimination be left for time to produce unaided, by the changing of ideas? It was doubtful, and in any case might be slow. As the Right was not dwindling, the idea inevitably came of dividing and dissolving it by separating the monarchist from the religious element. Not that this was the first time when the idea of winning back the Catholics had been mooted. There had been Republican Catholics in 1871, as there had been in 1848. The difficulty lay in the religious question itself, and not only on the clerical but also on the anti-clerical side. The Church also was obliged to handle it with care and 'without yielding to it,' and above all without giving the Radicals a chance of raising the cry of 'treason!' If the manœuvre of rallying was necessary after the ordeal of the Boulanger crisis, it was an extremely delicate one.

As with the Russian agreement, the news came as a surprise. On 12th November 1890 Cardinal Lavignerie delivered a speech at Algiers in which he advised 'unreserved adherence to the form of government.' It was incredible that the Cardinal should use such terms with-

PANAMA

out the leave of authority superior to his own, or that Pope Leo XIII would have bidden French Catholics to accept the Republican regime without previous consultation with the heads of the Republic. In point of fact, Cardinal Lavigerie, entrusted with negotiations by the Holy Father, saw Carnot and the chief ministers. In correspondence with Constans, he informed him of the attitude of the Holy See. From Rome he wrote that there was recognition of 'the necessity of explicit adherence on the part of the French episcopate to the Republican form,' whilst in return the Vatican required the prevention of 'all vexatious demonstrations against the Church.' Jacques Piou, one of the most conspicuous of those who rallied, records the favour shown towards the Republic by Leo XIII during the period preceding the Algiers speech, and notes the diplomatic services eagerly offered by the Pope to assist the *rapprochement* between France and Russia. He adds that the dealings between the President of the Council and the Nuncio 'became frequent' and that Freycinet's attitude towards the Pope was 'very deferential.' In the opinion of Leo XIII the constitutional path was the only one 'which could preserve the Church from cruel trials.' It does not seem too rash to detect in that phrase the echo of words which must have been uttered by men as subtle and adroit as Freycinet and Constans.

From whichever side the initiative came, the governmental Republicans thenceforward began to think of attaching part of the conservative element to their side. Such a policy was less easy in the Chamber than with the Vatican. The Radicals remained obdurate and sulky,

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

pressed for rigorous measures, and intimidated every ministry which inclined to come to terms with clericalism. Called upon to 'pursue the battle of the civil against the clerical power,' Freycinet had to yield, and was even overturned by a coalition of the moderates and the Right for having, at Radical instigation, proposed a new law against the religious orders. To reach the point of pursuing a policy of agreement with the Catholics and the Right as a whole, an urgent necessity had to be awaited.

The anarchist outrages of 1892 were a kind of warning that the moral state of the country was not good. Ravachol, who blew up buildings with dynamite, became the Attila, the dire scourge of society. This ruthlessly ferocious rebel mounted the scaffold singing that, for men to be happy, landlords must be hanged. That was not what people wanted at all. The first flood of emotion was such that the President of the Council, at that moment Emile Loubet, allowed himself to say: 'We are harvesting the crop sprung from pernicious seeds; for years past men have been allowed to say anything, and to do anything.' The anger was against material anarchy only.

The same President of the Council did not thunder against another evil, which on the contrary he strove to cover up. After the Wilson scandal, there were daily threats of others. Corruption was widespread, and Parliament infected. It became only too clear that Renan had been right in saying that politics had become the occupation of the classless and the third-rate. So

PANAMA

soon after Boulanger, when pitiless opponents had appeared with sharp eyes for flaws and vices, it would have required more courage, and perhaps more strength, than the successive ministries possessed to unveil the truth. It was hoped to keep everything quiet. Attempts at stifling, born of the fear of the regime losing its good name, and the fear lest partisans might be exposed and good friends punished—a fear which was in itself a sign of weakness—resulted in the Panama scandal acting like a slow poison instead of bursting out with fury. It was not so much a desire to save colleagues—a sentiment that is short-lived in politics—as the fear of a beam of light strong enough to disclose all the ravages of corruption. They did not want to know, because too much was known already, and because they feared that still more might be revealed.

In the Panama affair were united all the conditions requisite for a blaze-up of anger. To make it into an affair of State, which subsequently it was attempted to hush up for reasons of State, circumstances were necessary which the law itself had contrived in such a way as to be a temptation to the legislator.

There were few men in France more honoured and illustrious than Ferdinand de Lesseps, the builder of the Suez Canal. Columbus had discovered a world; Lesseps had changed the face of the world. And he had enriched those who had put trust in his words and his star. The Suez Canal had now been open to navigation for ten years. After a few years of uncertainty, its creator had overcome all obstacles and the enterprise was prospering. When he launched a new company for

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

the Panama Canal, the project kindled at once men's imaginations and the spirit of lucre. It was then seen that genius can be a potent force of delusion. Lesseps was blind to difficulties and figures. He was one of those men to whom money is a means and not an end. Having faith in his idea, he applied to the investing public to whom money is a reality, and made sincere but chimerical promises, concentrating his gaze on the actual task to be accomplished.

This in itself was not a danger to the stability of the State. The Panama Company was a private undertaking. In case of failure only its directors were responsible to the common law, if they should be proved dishonest. But loans succeeded loans, and the expenditure continually rose. To find capital the Company had recourse to a method used by the Suez Canal Company, and issued a loan with a drawing of premium bonds. In this way Parliament came to be involved in the Panama venture. The law required, in the general interest and for the protection of investors, that a loan of this class should be authorised by both Houses. Investors still had reason to fear their protectors.

What made the case serious was the fact that the Chamber, at first, was unfavourable towards the loan. The Company's credit dwindled with its resources. An authorisation from Parliament would be a recommendation of the enterprise. But the Chamber wavered between the fear of ruining this vast French undertaking, annihilating the enormous capital already sunk, and the responsibility of inducing new subscribers to invest their funds. It was here that venal agents intervened. They

PANAMA

paid for favourable reports. They purchased votes. The loan was authorised, and in June 1888 it was issued. Seven months later the Company had to be wound up. The whole balance sheet showed a loss of 1400 millions of francs, belonging to 850,000 subscribers.

This meant 850,000 ready-made malcontents. And these events had coincided with the peak of the Boulanger fever. The liquidation of Panama came very shortly after the election of Boulanger in Paris. How much greater the explosion might have been if the scandal had been revealed at that moment! But silence was kept for a time. Throughout four years, by pressure on the judicial processes, the ministries held up the prosecutions demanded by the injured shareholders. Later, certain ministers were shown to have personally received the ruined Company's money. The others knew, or suspected, that there were many venal deputies. If the affair ever came before the courts it was absolutely certain that the facts of corrupt practice would be revealed in their entirety. The scandal was all the more formidable because the bribed legislators, with very few exceptions, were Republicans. On the Right, in spite of all the probing, only Dugué de la Fauconnerie, and later a friend of Boulanger, Naquet, could be proved to be involved. The guilty and the suspects, it has to be admitted, were found among the Opportunists and Radicals. With the Boulanger crisis rising, the time was heaven-sent for attacks on the system and the personnel of Parliament if the scandal was laid bare. When the Boulanger movement was defeated in the elections of 1889, it had the opening for a dazzling counter-attack

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

by exposing the shame of Parliament. The tactical move was to allow the continuance of the loans to be acquired in 1893, and the pretext for diverting the course of judicial prosecution was to save Ferdinand de Lesseps, one of the revered figures of France, from dishonour. These were the elements in a drama which has not yet been probed to its innermost secrets.

We know enough, however, to understand the assiduity with which the governmental Republicans diverted inquiries. At first they procured as the chief law officer one Ricard, a presumptuous man with a taste for the limelight, to push forward prosecutions without reserves. He was then dropped. A few Radicals also assumed the side of virtue. These ardours were damped down. Four ministries in turn strove to stifle the Panama affair, because it was known from the outset that too many parliamentarians were compromised, and that few names would escape.

In fact, nearly everybody was involved. It was calculated that out of 1400 millions of francs subscribed by investors, scarcely half had been spent on work on the canal. The rest had gone in expenses of advertising, in bribes, in paying blackmail. The golden stream Pactolus had been flowing, and gradually nearly every one had drunk of it. Prosecutions against Lesseps and the directors were at last launched, the attacks on the Government by the Opposition making it impossible to postpone them any longer. Feeling ran high when, on 20th November 1892, the death was announced of the banker, Baron Jacques de Reinach, who had controlled the advertising funds of the Panama Company, and who

PANAMA

had doubtless bought the votes. If it was suicide, clearly the arch-corrupter was accusing himself, as it was also clear that his disappearance came as a relief to those under suspicion. Government, magistracy, and police combined to have the death declared natural. But this was asking too much of public credulity, and the exhumation of Reinach, called for in order to elucidate the mystery, was only carried out after pressure from the Chamber. Although judicial rules were violated with a view to shielding Parliament, the Left and the Centre began to realise that protection so obvious and so complacently accepted was covering them with infamy. Not only had Reinach disappeared, but his secrets followed him into the tomb. His papers had not been confiscated, and his relatives, in particular his nephew and son-in-law Joseph, an active politician reared in the school of opportunism, had had time to destroy them. The exhumation of the banker-Baron from his vault, the grave-diggers and lawyers leaning over his remains, formed the cemetery scene in a clandestine and corrupt drama. The corpse remained dumb.

One man had the courage to raise his voice in this silence, heavy with brooding suspicion. Jules Delahaye, mounting the tribune, hurled a thunderbolt by his declaration that more than one hundred parliamentarians had sold themselves. Proofs, he had none. He admitted as much later. He had merely been told, on behalf of the Panama Company, that he could safely stand out as the accuser. Above all, he was urged by instinct. Hatred is not always blind. This Catholic was

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

savouring his revenge, as the followers of Gambetta had the avenging sword in their hands. Many scores were paid off on that day. Delahaye was not in a position to give a single name. But his denunciation brought about an inquiry, because the guilty were afraid of accusing themselves if they refused an investigation, and the others were resolved to show their innocence.

Brisson, who lived on a reputation for integrity, presided over the commission of inquiry. Godefroy Cavaignac intervened with the Republican fervour of the heroic period. After laborious strivings, a few of the men inculpated were sacrificed to pacify press and public. Everything possible was attempted in order to save the others. Two suborners, Cornelius Herz and Arton, were no less laden with secrets than Reinach. If these two spoke, how many would quake in their shoes! Herz fled to England, where he died after long and unavailing attempts at extradition. The pursuit of the other across Europe by police agents in connivance with the fugitive was mere comedy. To the very last the search for the truth was a sham. The truth was the last thing wanted.

It was unwanted, because it would have exposed more than simply those who had sold their votes and pocketed the Panama money. In the end one deputy, Baihaut, was sentenced, because he was the only one who, with incredible clumsiness, confessed. Some had received money to be used, including Rouvier, Albert Grévy—the brother of Jules, whose family was always too fond of money—Arène, and others in greater and lesser positions. Then came those who had received indirect payments under various heads. Amongst these was

PANAMA

Clemenceau, who was on intimate terms with Cornelius Herz and could not clear himself of having intervened on behalf of Reinach with this strange blackmailer. Clemenceau was in his power through subvention paid to his newspaper, *La Justice*. Finally there were the men who had profited in a less personal way, but who had likewise blackmailed the Company. And these were Presidents of the Council—Floquet, and Freycinet himself. As it was notorious that the Company had large funds for publicity purposes, ministerial leaders had tapped on its cash-box in a way that brooked no refusal, whether to feed the Republican press, or to pay foreign newspapers, or to provide electoral funds. Rouvier, in his defence, ventured to say to the friends who were abandoning him: 'If I had not had recourse to the means for which I am being blamed, *you* probably would not be sitting in this Chamber.'

Accused and suspects were equally numerous among the Radicals and among the Opportunists. It was never known what fresh list was going to be disclosed. What the ministries knew was perhaps surpassed by what they feared they would learn. One after another they kept intervening to suspend or divert the course of justice in the hope of avoiding the damage which the whole regime might incur. The harm done to public morals was even worse than the simple facts of venality. Those who covered and shielded the bribed lost their own good names.

The result does not show that their efforts were fruitless. Regrettable as it may be, it is plain that this long dissimulation, these interventions in the judicial domain,

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

these manœuvres and forfeitures, averted a dangerous storm. The 'Panamist' Governments no doubt damaged some of the principles at the basis of society and the State. The judiciary demeaned itself by its servility. Political morality was cheapened by the impunity assured for the guilty. No purging process had been genuinely sought. That too was paid for in another way. But still, the dreaded peril had been side-tracked. The Panama affair was passionate and dramatic, in the Chamber and in the law courts. It did not kindle serious street demonstrations. 'Panama' was a harsher insult than 'Tongking' had been, and yet the Panama affair did not cause such a blaze of indignation as the Wilson scandal. The explosion of public feeling had, in fact, been prevented by the calculated slowness of the prosecutions, the use of various devices of procedure, the acquittal of those accused parties who had not been able to avoid trial by a declaration of 'not sufficient cause,' all the tricks of endless postponement. From time to time a few victims were handed over to be rescued later on. For a time the chief manipulators of all this—Loubet, Ribot, Freycinet—suffered in reputation and advancement. The essential, in their eyes, was saved. Far from upsetting the regime, Panama caused it no apparent injury.

It is true that indignation did not reach the heights it had touched when it attacked Grévy. The Presidency was not assailed. Sadi Carnot's probity was above suspicion, and he kept the Elysée unsullied. The worst charge that could be levelled at him was that of absolving ministers who were themselves shielding fraud. It is also true that anger and disgust did not coincide with

PANAMA

a different sentiment, as they had done in Ferry's time. The Boulanger crisis had sprung from the conjunction of outraged honesty and anxiety for the country's safety. Circumstances had altered. Patriotic feeling was satisfied by the Russian alliance. In the name of that sacred bond the Government stifled questions, intimidated investigation, and obtained silence when they let it be understood that the Panama affair comprised certain diplomatic secrets, and that in the interests of France certain names must not be known, certain curtains kept drawn. It was whispered in confirmation that the Russian ambassador, Mohrenheim, was one of the names on Reinach's list.

Although violence was not manifested, the Republicans were none the less stricken with a sort of timidity. Many of their number had become 'impossible,' some for always, some for a long time. The regime, for its own sake, had to show that it was capable of producing new leaders. The direct outcome of Panama was a rejuvenation of the personnel of politics. The affair itself was never totally concluded or elucidated. For several years it continued to crop up in the law courts. For months there was a pretence of seeking Arton. The trial ended on 21st May 1893 with the acquittal in the Court of Assizes of all the accused except Charles de Lesseps, the great man's son, who was shown to be the chief agent of corruption, Baihaut, the scapegoat who confessed, and the insignificant Blondin. The most difficult fences had been cleared. Those who had worked to stifle things could now merely withdraw. Nine days after the verdict the Ribot ministry fell. A clean sheet was needed. A

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

man with an undamaged reputation, Charles Dupuy, was entrusted with the new Government. He chose a number of men with equally unsullied names, most of whom had not previously held office. Amongst them was one newcomer who was destined to play a great part in the history of the Republic, Raymond Poincaré. The Panama affair had served to launch a new generation.

This was not all. A new course of government had to be found. Charles Dupuy was ambitious, and limited in ideas. At first he kept to the ordinary course of Left Centre ministries, taking up a position against the Right, excluding even those of that wing who had rallied to the Republic. This, with the elections only a few months off, was ill-conceived. Someone pointed this out. Constans, gifted with real political sense and well fitted for wielding power, was the first to venture to speak, at Toulouse, of 'religious peace,' of 'reconciliation in the Republic and through the Republic.' Constans offered to combine the forces of moderation. Meanwhile two Radical leaders, Goblet and Lockroy, were advising the alliance of their party with the Socialists, who were beginning to gain ground. The *blocs* and *cartels* of the future were foreshadowed. Goblet and Lockroy were precursors, and Constans likewise.

Charles Dupuy had heard the Toulouse speech, and his eyes were opened. Constans was clever and able, and clearly a dangerous rival. As it happened, there was an outburst of excitement in Paris a month later. There were riots in the Latin Quarter, and the closing of the Bourse du Travail caused fears of further disorder.

PANAMA

Charles Dupuy showed authority, being afraid, said Brisson, of seeing others take action in his place. In the Chamber his action was approved by the Right, whose assistance he accepted despite the protests of his collaborator Peytral. This episode prefaced the period now opening, striking a note as fresh as the men to whom appeal had lately been made.

The legislative elections of August-September 1893 were in some respects surprising. It might be said that the great scandal had left the whole country quite unaffected. Some avowed 'Panamists' were re-elected. Daniel Wilson, as if washed clean by the turpitude of other men, returned to his seat, while Jules Delahaye, the accuser, lost his. But Clemenceau was driven out of the Chamber, rejected by his Republican Department of Var. He bore the main brunt of the attacks from the adherents of Boulanger. By his connection with Cornelius Herz they held him up as being in the pay of foreign countries, an agent of Britain. Not even the falsity of certain damning documents produced against him enabled Clemenceau to overcome his unpopularity. Nobody emerged from Panama more discredited than Clemenceau. The man formerly dreaded for 'his sword, his pistol, and his tongue,' was laid low. It needed a revolution to raise him again. With him radicalism lost its leader. That was what the Panama taint resulted in. For several years the Radical party was left impotent; or rather it had to change its aspect.

These elections had another singular feature. There was an enormous mass of abstentions from the poll. Voters formed only a little over half of the electoral

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

rolls, as if the people had not known in what direction to use their sovereignty. Even disgust profited nobody. In fact, the rally proved to be a success for the Republic, although it failed for the Church, which did not receive the satisfaction hoped for from the move. It divided the Conservatives without giving them fresh voting support. Albert de Mun and Jacques Piou, the most conspicuous of those who rallied, did not even retain their seats. The Monarchists, on their side, ill-requited for their long devotion to the cause of religion, had suffered serious weakening, which did not clear them of their reputation for clericalism. And the national idea helped neither them nor the revisionists when the Republic was giving signs of its military zeal and the Russian alliance was proclaimed in hymns and chants. What Freycinet had sought was secured. The Republic could dismiss this servant who had shown his further devotion to it by sullyng its purity in Panama. These slight stains had not been altogether useless.

CHAPTER VIII

THE SAFE HARBOUR?

THE desired goal seemed to be reached. The Chamber contained over three hundred Governmental Republicans, who held a majority in themselves. The whole of the Right, including those who had 'rallied,' and were treated ironically as having resigned, counted only about a hundred members. The opposition of Monarchists was ceasing to be a serious handicap in the play of the parliamentary regime, since the disjointed Right and the ostracised Clemenceau could no longer join in their previous coalitions. All seemed clear for a thoroughly moderate Republic, a non-doctrinal Republic, administering on the lines of the July Monarchy and the Second Empire. The harbour at last! It seemed as if safe anchorage were at hand.

Panama had even left a sedative effect. The parties were decapitated, which to a great extent led to this sense of tranquillity. The surviving Opportunist leaders no longer dared to raise their voices, because of their proved failings, greater or lesser. The authority of moderate governments was doubtless weakened thereby. Radicalism, likewise bereft of its hotheads, and composed of obscure provincials, lacked fire. The extreme Left opposition moved over to the Socialists, who in spite of

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

their successes were still too few to exercise influence and become a danger, but were just sufficient to enable the terror which they inspired and reprobation of their system to be used as a weapon of government.

The charm of Russia made the task easy. On 17th October 1893 Paris welcomed Admiral Avellan with enthusiasm bordering on frenzy. The crowd that cheered him was the same which had surged behind Boulanger. If ever one emotion were substituted for another, it was now. A safe harbour was reached again.

A sign of the times appeared when the new Chamber met. As its President it chose Casimir Périer, a name formerly associated with the Orléans cause, but now rallied to the Republic. A grandson of that minister of Louis-Philippe who, a legitimist himself, had accepted the July Monarchy in order to serve the cause of order by 'resistance,' Casimir Périer typified that upper middle class which reassured the feelings of the lesser bourgeoisie, that aristocracy of financial and business magnates looked up to with trust and respect by the throng of ordinary bondholders. Casimir Périer's signature was valid, and no venal cheque could find its way to his pocket-book. Already there had been a Republic of sound men. With Casimir Périer arose the Republic of very sound men.

Under the eye of this great personage, Charles Dupuy, breathing the air of the time, read a ministerial programme which was exquisite in its moderation. He animadverted on revision of the Constitution, on separation of Church and State, on income tax, on collectivism, and contented himself with a few formal clauses regard-

THE SAFE HARBOUR?

ing secular education. This was the perfection of Conservative Republicanism, to the taste of Jules Grévy. 'You wish to stop the march of history,' cried Jaurès to him, lately converted to socialism and preparing to become the party's orator. Dupuy went on. He pursued the method of checking the march of democracy by halts and rests.

On that day, too, Jaurès made another remark which was a curious reminder of the prophecy of the Catholics vanquished by Jules Ferry. Addressing the Centre Republicans, he said: 'You have interrupted the old lullaby which sang human misery to sleep, and human misery has woken with cries. . . . If you stand terror-struck to-day, it is before your own work.' It was not certain that the Left Centre was so terrified. It believed, like Grévy, that the social conditions of France were indestructible, and fifteen years of Republicans' government did not belie that confidence when they reached their climax in so temperate a Chamber as this one.

Dupuy remarked jovially that he could shift his rifle to the other shoulder. He had simply forgotten, in turning Conservative, that he had three Radicals in his ministry. They resigned, the Government collapsed, and Casimir Périer was summoned to form a new one. Things went from good to better. The ministers' names were General Mercier, Jonnart, a man of very high standing, and Spuller, loyal to the memory of Gambetta, though not to the old password of his chief, because he had already become almost a clerical, that is to say, gone over to 'the enemy.'

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

Everything was going on according to the wishes of a society for which the Republic, being a regime like any other, was only the label of a constant, unaltering governance. The spectre of the anarchism served only to confirm the desire for duration and the will to defend the existence of this society based upon tranquil possession. On the day when Vaillant hurled a bomb into the assembled Chamber, Charles Dupuy, from the President's chair, spoke the greatly admired words: 'The House remains in session.' It was true. Everything remained 'in session' since the time when Thiers suppressed the Commune. Vaillant and Emile Henry went to the guillotine, leaving the law of repression behind them.

The year 1894 saw the full bloom of the Conservative Republic. The anarchists turned to 'propaganda by facts,' but obtained a countering propaganda. An abyss of perdition came for a moment into view, and the country sought means of security. Men wondered vaguely whether the help of the spiritual forces had not been unduly neglected. Dupuy had already spoken of 'religious peace,' and now the Minister of Education, who dealt with the governance of souls, went further. Spuller came originally from Baden—and had often been attacked for that!—and from that Catholic Germany he retained a fondness for the Church which was perhaps a love of his native land. On 3rd March a deputy of the Right complained that a mayor had forbidden the display of religious emblems at funerals. Spuller replied that the State was secular, but tolerant and conciliatory.

THE SAFE HARBOUR?

He ventured even to announce a 'new spirit.' The phrase ran through the whole of France, infuriating some, encouraging others. It marked a date. A new era was coming into sight, a Republic no longer warring with belief, accepting the Church as an associate. Spuller's 'new spirit' was a retort to the 'old lullaby' of Jaurès, and seemed to be the triumph of the 'rallying' policy. It was a long way now from the days when the crucifixes torn down from the schools were carried away in dust-carts! Jules Ferry had died in 1893, having laid aside the old passions and himself at peace. Would even he have attacked the 'new spirit'?

So conservative was the tone now that it was sometimes too much for the Right. Spuller's phrase, despite the imprecations of the older Radicals, did not sink the ministry. Jonnart caused its downfall because, as Minister of Public Works, he refused the right of the workers on the State Railway to form trade unions. On a motion supporting the contrary thesis and moved by a Royalist, the cabinet of Casimir Périer was left in a minority. The President of the Council left the Chamber in the customary way, but 'with an eagerness noticed by everybody.' Power tempted him, he escaped from it, and he was constantly being offered it.

Such was the scarcity of men since Panama engulfed the Republicans, that Charles Dupuy returned once more. None of the old brigade cut a presentable figure. They had to restore a semblance of purity, in silent retreat. The youthful newcomers were not regarded as mature enough to lead the Government. There was a kind of 'reason of State,' a healthy rule of prudence,

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

which, for ministerial control, favoured men who had grown old in office. Thiers and Grévy, those patron saints of the regime, had been full of years. The risks of popular rule were balanced by experience, the rule of the people steadied by the rule of the elders.

Things were going on in this humdrum style, comfortably enough, when Sadi Carnot was assassinated, on 24th June 1894. Breaking with the sedentary and parsimonious habits of Jules Grévy, who scarcely emerged from his palace more than if it had been an Escorial, Carnot enjoyed making tours of France, and by showing himself made his person and his office more popular. On that day, in Lyons, he was stabbed by the Italian anarchist Caserio, the avenger of Vaillant. With a cry of 'Long live the Revolution!' Caserio struck down the grandson of a famous revolutionary regicide, who, in 1793, had been one of the Committee of Public Safety which gave orders for the destruction of Lyons. It was a striking object-lesson in the changes of those hundred years, and in how much the Republic had altered with their passing. Two hours before the crime, again expressing the new spirit, Sadi Carnot had said: 'There are no longer any parties!' He died fortified by the last rites of the Church, blessed by the Primate of the Gauls. At Notre-Dame a cardinal spoke the funeral oration over a martyr for order.

It was for his name, his ancestry, that Sadi Carnot had been elected. Because of another ancestor, a name which had been the symbol of 'resistance,' Casimir Périer was elected in his stead. The choice fitted the

THE SAFE HARBOUR?

turn of events admirably. As the air was full of a kind of Orleanism, it was natural that the descendant of a minister of Louis-Philippe should be elected as head of the State. Thus, after twenty years' interval, the ideas of Thiers were still holding their own. They were even outstripped. Thiers calculated that the intermediary group, 'Orleanist on occasion,' by rallying to the Republic, would help to establish 'constitutional monarchy under another name.' The said group had behaved in accordance with this conjecture. Essential in establishing the system, it became its master.

The hereditary principle, twice applied to the Presidential election, was giving strange results. In Sadi Carnot the revolutionary tradition had become regulated, softened, reduced to the proportions of a 1789 for engineers, commemorated in the exhibits of machinery at the Universal Exhibition in Paris. In Casimir Périer the liking for authority, so conspicuous in his imperious ancestor, degenerated into touchiness and hot temper. He was not made for 'resistance.'

After his election he declared in his message to the Chamber and Senate: 'It will be my duty neither to misinterpret nor to prescribe the rights conferred upon me by the Constitution.' There were expectations of an active and authoritative Presidency, with an amplification of the office. The Left groups were then really startled, and not altogether alone in their alarm. Possibly the influence of Freemasonry was felt on some Republicans hitherto less rabid. Perhaps this is one of the points where it would be well to apply the remark of Jean Dietz: 'The inner history of the regime will always be

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

difficult to write so long as the official reports of the Masonic bodies remain unpublished.' In any case, men with no extreme views began to show fear of reaction. The fear of an abandonment of Republican spirit did what the 'new spirit' had not done. Similarly, after Thermidor, the appeal to 'the genius of the Revolution' brought about relapses into Jacobinism. The murder of Carnot had determined Charles Dupuy to propose severe measures against anarchy. Individual liberty, the freedom of the press—here were the essentials of the Republic in danger. Radicals and Socialists fought these emergency laws, which they called 'villainous.' A few middle groups joined them; perhaps the most sincere, whether as old-fashioned Liberals or as feeling that they should never break completely with the Left. From that moment dates the orientation of a certain number of Republicans towards what seemed to them to be really the Republic. The rift was still small. Before long it would be enlarged.

The unexpected opposition obliged Dupuy to modify the 'villainous' laws. They were passed, but the extreme Left felt the time had come to press forward after this success. The Socialist leader in the Chamber, Jules Guesde, Jaurès, Alexandre Millerand, preached doctrines and theory, for lack of better to do. Their expositions invariably resulted in motions condemning collectivism and extolling the principle of private property. And during this phase the polemicists took Casimir Périer as their target.

Parties do not always, as they believe, achieve their will by attacking personalities. This time their aim was

THE SAFE HARBOUR ?

well-chosen. Against this great capitalist, principal shareholder in the Anzin minefields, the landlord of Pont-sur-Seine, more democratic envy was perhaps kindled than proletarian wrath. But most important was the fact that the victim, too sensitive and well-bred, could not tolerate invective or caricature. His cup overflowed when the most zealous of his persecutors, Gérault-Richard, serving a prison sentence for insults to the head of the State, was elected a deputy for Paris. This was early in January 1895. Three weeks before, Burdeau, President of the Chamber, had died; his reputation was still intact, as the Panama scandal struck him only posthumously. His place was taken by Brisson, the Radical candidate who defeated Méline, the candidate of the moderates. On 14th January the Dupuy ministry, thus weakened, collapsed over the question of the railway agreements, an old quarrel which since 1883 had served to produce unsavoury accusations. Next day Casimir Périer resigned, blaming in his message the constitutional fictions which deprived the Presidency of 'means of action and control.' Later he added that the President was merely a master of ceremonies.

The institution was having no luck. MacMahon had respectably retired, Grévy had done so under pressure, Carnot had been stabbed. The fourth President of the Republic was leaving the Elysée, banging the doors behind him, complaining of his compulsory impotence, and of a lack of general regard, on the part both of the public and of ministers who did not condescend to keep him informed about affairs. Casimir Périer did not question the possibility of his own faculties, or whether

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

he personally possessed the necessary force to exercise his official powers. He spitefully flung ridicule and contempt on the hapless institution, himself furnishing reasons for its abolition. And yet the Radicals were not now calling for its suppression: they preferred to solicit the post for one of themselves.

Did Casimir Périer state all his reasons? Were there not other and personal ones? However that may be, his departure weakened the reign of the moderates. He had deplored his ineffectiveness. His electors complained of his departure. The Radical party, finding an unexpected opportunity, backed Brisson for the Presidency, and it required all the voting strength of the Right to keep him out, by electing instead Félix Faure, a second-rate man, but handsome, several times a minor minister, and an eminent business man in Havre. The Republic of 'very sound' men had been disappointing, and there was a return to the Republic of merely 'sound' men.

To understand these times, which held in them so much of later years in French history, it should be realised that the great fear of the middle classes then was for a sort of lynx named Alexandre Millerand. Another Socialist, also of the wolf tribe, was recommending the general strike, which had been accepted in principle, on his motion, by the trade unions at their congress in September 1894. The name of this agitator was Aristide Briand. Before each of these men lay a future very different from what they proclaimed. Meanwhile Clemenceau remained a victim to the hue-and-cry which had kept him out of the Chamber, and, deprived of

THE SAFE HARBOUR?

the tribune, he had to be content with the newspapers. Then, on 22nd December 1894, an artillery officer attached to the army General Staff, Captain Alfred Dreyfus, was sentenced on a charge of treason to deportation for life to a fortified place of confinement. The indignation against him was immense. Clemenceau regretted that the offence did not entail death. In the Chamber a deputy urged that the traitor ought to be shot. This deputy's name was Jean Jaurès. There was not a single man alive at that moment clever enough to see that this Dreyfus case was going to bring about a revolution.

But the next three years were to show that, if power was to be taken from the moderates, if the Republic were to be torn from the joys of conservatism and led back into more truly Republican paths, a great commotion would be needed, as had already been needed to amnesty the Panama reprobates.

It becomes monotonous to observe how every President since Thiers and MacMahon used the same words and made the same promises. Félix Faure also announced 'conciliation and pacification,' and added to these: 'solid justice to prepare the way for general concord . . . the continual development of material and moral welfare.' They were always the words people liked to hear. This evocation of the blessings of life, boundlessly extended and ceaselessly spreading, was agreeable, and the President of the Council chosen by Félix Faure responded to this programme of sovereign good. With the shortage of men, it had been hard to find a successor to Charles Dupuy, and it proved necessary to turn to

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

Alexandre Ribot, who was slightly tainted by Panama, inasmuch as he had used his austerity to help to stifle the affair. But this great parliamentarian was at least a classically conservative financier; and he was covered by another guarantee of immunity. He had already made his name associated with the first demonstrations of friendship with Russia, and now, with Gabriel Hanotaux, the Foreign Minister, he could proclaim an actual alliance. To have an ally, a real and large ally, was a comfort of which France did not soon tire.

Quite soon it became clear that in practice this alliance had difficulties. It frequently went astray without the public suspecting the fact. Conceived as a safeguard against Germany, it led to uncomfortable experiences with Germany. Thus, in order not to stand apart from Russia, France despatched certain vessels to the inauguration of the Kiel Canal, a work carried out by funds provided through the indemnity of 1871. The Russian ally became the intermediary for an alliance with the German Emperor, who was then meditating a European alliance against Britain. Nor was that the only complication into which Russia led France, nor the only disappointment. At the moment it was not noticed.

A railway, quite a small railway (the 'Sud'), but well charged with scandal, caused the downfall of this moderate ministry. The majority gave way. Intense efforts were made to find leaders. But a relief had to be arranged, and the hand was passed to the Radicals. Two years after the elections giving a majority to

THE SAFE HARBOUR?

the Governmental Republicans, this point had been reached.

The interval, however, was brief, The Radical party was only a shadow of its old self. It had even fewer ideas than leaders. Revision had been appropriated by the Boulanger faction. It had abandoned its protest against the Treaty of Frankfurt. Socialism, on its left, was a serious competitor. It was left with only a narrower and more rural form of anti-clericalism than that of the other Republicans. It needed rejuvenation, and it had to wear a bolder look without becoming too fearsome. Léon Bourgeois, the amenable man summoned by Félix Faure, had just what was needed to give the illusion of activity, just as Casimir Périer had given that of resistance.

In the 'sensible and practical socialism' announced by one of his cabinet, these were a bigger future than he himself supposed. It was the interpretation of the 'moral and material welfare,' and also the beginning of a system. Nobody invented it. It was in the air. A sensible socialism which did not assail property, a practical socialism which was to distribute welfare through the channel of subsidies—here was a socialism with excellent electoral virtues. Through this the Radical party regained a justification for its existence, and could follow its vocation. There was a popular notion that somewhere, guarded by a few rich men, there exists a vast treasure, and that if only some small part of this can be taken it would suffice to make everybody happy. Whence came the idea of the income tax, conceived as a means of establishing social justice and

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

obtaining the help of the great fortunes to relieve the needy. Only one point could be astonishing: that it had taken twenty years of a Republic to bring into the foreground the essentially democratic idea of a distribution of wealth by the State.

For nearly twenty years, also, the good genius of the Republic had been watching to hold it back from that slippery slope, fearing that it might perish in an abyss of finance. It was to take twenty years more, and even a war, to bring the income tax into full operation. But with the Bourgeois ministry the principle became adopted by the Chamber. The Finance Minister who succeeded in this was Paul Doumer, who was then regarded as a dangerously headstrong man. His perilous project was stifled at birth. And the fact of such a vote being obtained after the moderates' victory in the previous elections was explicable only because every Assembly had its contingent of blind followers of any government holding office.

The strong aversion to the income tax inspired in the middle classes showed much clear-sightedness. It was adventurous to tamper with a fiscal system which had been tested now for over a hundred years. The Conservative Senate took fright and refused support to the Radical Government. It was the Senate of opportunism, the very citadel of prudence, the council of elders faithful to its mission, hostile to rashness.

According to its hitherto consistent doctrine, the Radical party would admit that the power to overturn the Government resided only in the mandatories of universal

THE SAFE HARBOUR?

suffrage. Léon Bourgeois, invoking the name of Gambetta, maintained that the attributes of the two Houses were distinct; that the Senate had the right of dissolution and, through the High Court, the right of passing a judicial verdict; that the equilibrium was destroyed for the profit of one Assembly if, to its own due rights, the Assembly of a restricted franchise added the rights of the other. For over three months the Radical ministry refused to pay heed to the hostile vote, which the Senators emphasised by repeating. There were some attempts at agitation against the reactionary Senate, but once again it was found that the country cared little about constitutional arguments. On 21st April 1896 the Senate took energetic steps and rejected a request for credits intended for the Madagascar expedition. The conflict had to be brought to a head, and a Congress would have to be held to revise or to interpret the Constitution. If not, it could only be a question of giving way. Léon Bourgeois gave way.

The date was doubly important. In the first place, it marked the definite abandonment of constitutional revision. The Radical party no longer offered more than a nominal protest against the creation of 1875. With a Senate which had become equally powerful with the Chamber, the Constitution was renewing a lease of nearly forty years. Subsequently, after the check of Léon Bourgeois, the moderates resumed control. But having lost part of their group, that which had moved over to the Left, they could no longer stand upright save with the help of the full force of the Right. 'You are, and you will remain, the protégé of the Right!'

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

exclaimed the fierce Millerand to Jules Méline. Méline bore with the invective patiently, able through his own past to foresee the future of more than one of his assailants.

He was an old Republican. He had even had one foot in the Commune, and doubtless drew it out quickly. To his electors in the Vosges he remained a 'blue,' whilst in Paris he had the reputation of a reactionary. Fundamentally, Méline was a countryman. In his view it was agriculture, which his tariff laws had saved, that governed France, and whatever could be done through wheat and hay, Méline did. The Conservative Republic no longer seemed a 'stupidity' or a chimera. When Nicholas II came to France, welcomed there as a saviour,—for the Russian alliance still had its dazzling lustre—the Emperor of the *moujiks* might well have thought that the French State had found its definite form in the apotheosis of the peasant proprietor.

From the Left came the constant cry that Méline meant dear bread. But the man in sabots was unmoved. The Moderate Government, with the support of a tolerant Right, survived for two years, seeming to defy time. What was needed to open the doors to those who had been shut out by excesses, violence, and compromised reputations? Nothing less than a revolution, and as the great mass of material interests was satisfied, a revolution could spring only from a battle for ideas. In this battle a Republic of countrymen was to find itself unarmed.

On 16th November 1897 the newspapers published the text of a letter addressed to the War Minister. It

THE SAFE HARBOUR?

was written by Mathieu Dreyfus, brother of the officer condemned in 1894, and it denounced Commandant Esterhazy as the perpetrator of the act of treason. This was the opening of the most far-reaching and dramatic judicial affair ever known. It was to change the face of things altogether, and very few men suspected it.

CHAPTER IX

THE DREYFUS REVOLUTION

WITH gentle obstinacy Jules Méline kept on repeating, 'There is no Dreyfus affair.' There were really two, one judicial, the other political; one in the law courts, the other in opinion. There was another as well, and the greatest, a revolution in ideas, in the cast of men's minds; and this undermined heaven and earth because it made Dreyfus 'a symbol.' Regarding this double passage from temporal to spiritual and from spiritual to temporal, both Barrès and Péguy are agreed, as they are in the discovery that Méline, his eyes fixed on the provision market prices, had not the slightest understanding of it. This worthy agriculturist did not know that he exuded boredom. And herein lay a phenomenon often found among the French. Frenchmen were weary of decent mediocrity, of a vegetating existence, of humdrum merits. Wheat and live-stock prices were rising. What nourishment was provided for the emotions and the intelligence? Respectable patriotism was cultivated, but the idealism of 'revenge' had long been jettisoned. The word Republic was constantly reiterated, and democracy was rebuffed. These years seemed hollow. Amongst the active intellects yawns could be heard. They felt a craving for action, a longing to fight for some

THE DREYFUS REVOLUTION

cause or other. 'Somehow or other,' said Péguy, 'a crisis was coming.' As the Dreyfus affair, that crisis was a convulsion.

In reiterating that the Dreyfus affair did not exist, Méline was perfectly reasonable, and indeed too much so. He clung to that respect for a duly settled question which is one of the essentials of public order. He ranked it with that respect for law and contracts without which there can be no security for anyone. But this was not only a question of the general principle. When the condemnation of Dreyfus was assailed, it was inevitable that the institution of the army should also be assailed, because his judges had been soldiers. They were charged with an infraction of rights. And hence came consequences which were not produced for ordinary magistrates. From the first, the highest interests of the nation and State were at stake. Two conceptions, two opposites, were bound to come violently into collision. This was what Méline and his bloodless maxim did not make allowance for.

Nevertheless, the power of judging men, delegated as it is to fallible men, sets justice and injustice in the scales. Judicial error stirs up more feeling than the error of a doctor who closes the coffin over a living man. Nothing perturbs humanity in the way that a great trial does. One such trial lies at the roots of Christianity. The trial of Socrates is a starting-point of philosophy. Men's minds were certain to be profoundly moved by the affirmation that an innocent man, the victim of racial prejudice, was undergoing an undeserved punishment. When it was further alleged, by a no less gratuitous

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

supposition, that the military tribunal had obeyed a spirit of caste, and had abused a twofold power, drawn both from its judicial function and from its hierarchical authority, an appeal was made to the instinctive hatred of discipline and the commander. It roused the spirit of anarchy. And authority, in its turn, was provoked into self-defence.

The Dreyfus case might have remained simply a *cause célèbre* or an historical enigma. Actually it grew, became a political battlefield, and cut France in two. Intellectual forces, and the most illustrious names, fought in it. And it assumed the scale of a religious war, after kindling in those who invoked justice and truth a truly sectarian passion. How men in those days were '*dreyfusards*' or '*dreyfusistes*' or '*dreyfusiens*,' shades of distinction like the variants of Protestant churches; how one party seized hold of this 'religious movement' to make it what Georges Sorel called 'the Dreyfus revolution,' until the ultimate 'fraudulent bankruptcy' of the cause, that collapse into demagoguery which Péguy execrated in the name of his 'mysticism': all this would require a long narrative. Nowadays not many people know even the facts of the case, what made its excitement so prolonged, the basis of this endless quarrel, the reasons why the truth was perpetually obscured, leaving the problem always unanswered.

The Dreyfus affair lasted for twelve years. It took Joseph Reinach six volumes to recount it. The mere *Précis* by Dutrait-Crozon contains seven hundred pages. And never have there been seen so many incidents,

THE DREYFUS REVOLUTION

episodes, trials superimposed on trials, dramatic turns and twists, whilst soldiers, lawyers, magistrates, experts, spies, ministers, diplomats, authors, domestic servants, and even a former head of the State—nearly a thousand all told—came into the picture either as actors or as witnesses. The complexity of the whole story was such that jesting distinctions were drawn between Bachelors, Masters, and Doctors of Dreyfusology. It ceased to be known as the Dreyfus affair, but simply as ‘the Affair,’ the great and only Affair, which ranged Frenchmen in hostile camps, and filled their minds year after year. To understand its extraordinary scope, it is essential to recall the circumstances of its birth and growth, and how it came to wind itself round its core to such an extent that, as it could no longer be unravelled, it had to be cut, as in Turkey, where, according to Montesquieu, it does not matter how disputes are finished, so long as they are finished with.

Going back to the origins of the Dreyfus affair, it will be seen that they fall into that part of this narrative which described the Republicans’ work for the organisation of the army. They had succeeded in creating a military instrument capable of confronting Germany. It was only natural that Germany should feel some concern about this, and try to discover the plans of the French General Staff and the secrets of their armaments. As soon as Freycinet began his task, espionage had begun to develop. Two traitors had already been discovered and condemned; one was an official in the technical branch of the artillery, Boutonnet by name, and the other,

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

Greiner, a clerk in the Marine Ministry. The intelligence branch of the War Office was on the alert. It had no doubts that the German military attaché, Schwarzkoppen, was controlling an espionage system from the German Embassy, in conjunction with the Italian military attaché, Panizzardi.

It is important to note, in the first place, that the authenticity of the famous *bordereau*, the central document in the charges against Dreyfus, was not disputed. It formed the *corpus delicti* round which the battle raged for twelve years without being put in question. Indeed, its origin was indisputable. But the document came into the hands of the War Office as the fruit of a theft committed in the German Embassy, a fact which might naturally create grave complications. For that reason General Saussier and the Foreign Secretary, Hanotaux, were of opinion that a prosecution should not be launched. But the opposite view prevailed in the Government, on the grounds that impunity was an incitement to treason, and that it was important to make an example. Besides, the Emperor William II was complaining that his military attaché was being accused by the French newspapers, and insisted on a note freeing the German ambassador from responsibility. In point of fact, the abstraction of documents from the inviolable residence of a diplomatic representative was quite enough to create a serious incident. There was one famous night at the Elysée when it was feared that, on these grounds, Germany might instantly declare war on France, a circumstance which went still further to prove the authenticity of the *bordereau*.

THE DREYFUS REVOLUTION

Suspicion was not instantly attached to anyone. It was clear that the sender of the *bordereau* took part in the life of the General Staff, and must be an artillery officer. The list of documents given to Schwartzkoppen also led to inquiries amongst the officers undergoing Staff instructional work, who of necessity passed through the successive bureaux of the Staff. A process of elimination and the resemblances of handwriting led finally to the charge being made against Captain Alfred Dreyfus. He was condemned by a court martial without being found in the act of guilt, without confessions being recorded either by the prosecution or by the tribunal. The defence had accordingly pleaded not guilty. The explanations tantamount to confession which handed Dreyfus over to the ceremony of his military degradation were subsequently contested.

At an early stage after this it was stated that Dreyfus had been found guilty after the communication of secret documents, and because he was a Jew. His judges were suspected of having bowed to the insistence of an anti-Semite journal. But their tribunal had not been self-constituted. The Government of 1894 had constituted it, and it was they who committed the original error. The wrong, if one considered the injury which France was to suffer, lay in having recourse to a process of judgment which inevitably made the case a subject of controversy. It would have been more prudent to keep Dreyfus under surveillance until he was caught in the act. It would have been more skilful and less honourable to get rid of him without leaving traces. An unscrupulous General Staff would have sent

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

him silently into one of those colonies from which men do not return.

Immediately after the trial in 1894, his brothers and other relatives, after defending him, undertook the task of establishing his innocence. Devoted, tenacious, and provided with influence and resources, they interested various people in the case of their kinsman. Certain sensitive and generous hearts were perturbed by the affirmation that a wrong had been done. Others (the prime example of these being Péguy) made the reparation of this wrong into a question of conscience and honour for Frenchmen. It was in order to nip this agitation in the bud that Méline invoked the principle of the affair being over and done with. But in order to quash the judgment of 1894, it was necessary to produce a new fact. Pending its discovery it was alleged that the innocent Dreyfus had been unjustly condemned by illegal methods, although partisans of innocence as ardent as Jaurès and Trarieux—so much did contradictions obscure the issue—admitted that secret papers could be communicated in a trial for treason. But it was added that their communication had been made in bad faith, which led to generalisations. Reflections were made upon courts martial, upon officers, their loyalty and sense of rank, on the army itself, sacred to the great mass of Frenchmen. Immediately the case began to spread outside of its judicial limits, and two camps were formed. The partisans of Dreyfus' innocence were at first subject to great unpopularity, and this very circumstance was not unfavourable to the cause of Dreyfus. If courage were needed to rally to that side, it acquired

THE DREYFUS REVOLUTION

the attraction of originality, of a challenge to common opinion, even of sacrifice. The first Dreyfusards proudly styled themselves intellectuals. Later they stressed their distinction from the late-comers to the battle, the mob which invaded their private preserve when it could only be profitable to do so.

Men's minds were seething. But the Affair itself stood still. An innocent man can be wrongly condemned. When a crime is committed, somebody must have committed it; and the incriminating document was extant. If Dreyfus was not the author of the *bordereau*, who was? Mathieu Dreyfus denounced Commandant Esterhazy, a man sunk in debt and of discredited honour, whose culpability was admitted by the new head of the Intelligence branch, Commandant (later Colonel) Picquart. From this new complications were to arise, as Picquart in his turn was accused of trickery and falsifications for which he was prosecuted, whilst himself accusing his own colleagues of prevarication and forgery. Meanwhile charges had been formulated against Esterhazy, who was brought before a court martial. He declared his innocence. Although he was a thoroughly suspicious character, proof was lacking to his accusers and the inquiry revealed nothing. The Government commissioner abandoned the charge. Esterhazy was acquitted, the public rashly applauding. This seemed to be the end of the Affair. Actually it was just beginning.

The real signal for the opening of the campaign was given by a newspaper founded to support the Dreyfus cause, edited by Clemenceau. On 13th January 1898,

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

two days after Esterhazy's acquittal, *L'Aurore* published a violent article signed by Emile Zola, under the famous heading 'J'accuse.' Anatole France correctly described it as 'a revolutionary act of incomparable force.' Zola accused the military chiefs and judges of having deliberately ruined an innocent man and wilfully whitewashed a criminal. He in his turn was prosecuted in the criminal courts for defamation, and was convicted. The excitement in both camps was redoubled. On both sides positions had been definitely taken up. Things had gone too far now for any proof to be capable of convincing both parties.

With Esterhazy ruled out, a strange situation had now developed. The law insists that an accused man, having once been cleared by a verdict of acquittal, can never be prosecuted or otherwise disturbed on the same charge, even though his guilt be proved to the hilt, or if he make the fullest confession. After his acquittal, Esterhazy let it be understood, at first with precautions and reticences, later in a more and more obvious fashion, that he himself had written the *bordereau*. These confessions, being free from risk and possible penalties, were suspect. The anti-Dreyfusards denied that Esterhazy could have been in a position to obtain the documents mentioned in the *bordereau*. Besides, might not a man so disreputable as this adventurer have taken to himself the burden of guilt, in order to benefit someone else? If he was capable of treason, he was also quite capable of impersonating a traitor. The mystery had not been dispersed, and fresh impetus was given to the feud. The Dreyfusards, whilst taking Esterhazy's admissions into account, thought it

THE DREYFUS REVOLUTION

well to support them by evidence from handwriting experts; and these experts were no more infallible than those who had originally recognised the handwriting of Dreyfus in the incriminating document. However that might be, even if Esterhazy had been wrongly acquitted of the charge, his case could no longer be the object of a contradictory judgment alone competent to clear away obscurity and doubt. As regards Dreyfus, on the other hand, he had been condemned, and should be retried if a fact capable of proving his innocence were revealed. The Affair was becoming inextricable. It thereby became increasingly provocative of increasing violence, and was transformed into a weapon of civil war: which prompted the remark of Charles Maurras that if Dreyfus was innocent he should be made a Marshal of France, and a dozen of his chief defenders should be shot. Those who were estranged by the new trend in the regime, those who hoped to revert to truly Republican ideas, those who were temperamentally or professionally anarchistic, all came gradually into the Dreyfus camp. The first champions of his innocence had been isolated figures. Some had direct interest in their cause, others were disinterested, but they had suffered for its sake, if only by exposing themselves to public execration. Their sparse ranks filled up. By the end the stream became a flood. The Dreyfus case became an affair of politics which enabled the Radicals to regain power and the Socialists to slip in behind them.

The alliance between the moderates of the Right had given the Méline ministry a long span of life. The general elections took place in May 1898. The result

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

seemed to bring nothing new. This Chamber scarcely differed from its predecessor, and on the country as a whole the Affair produced no more effect than had the Panama crisis. Everything went on as if politics were one thing and the election another. But a change there was, and it was speedily visible. Méline seemed to be sure of again obtaining his majority, when, at the first interpellation in the Chamber, he was deserted by some of his followers on a motion put forward by the Radicals, enjoining the ministry to accept no further voting support from the Right. Although Méline won the vote of confidence on the text which he accepted, he found his majority too much weakened, and resigned. This was an opening success for the Left. It was also one for the partisans of Dreyfus. With Méline the Conservative Republic was coming to a close; and with it was disappearing the principle of the 'settled question.' The Dreyfusard party henceforth had the Government with it and not against it. The tables had been turned.

Brisson, the veteran of the Left who became President of the Council, already inclined towards a retrial. His War Minister was Godefroy Cavaignac, likewise a Radical, an ardent patriot and sincere in his convictions; his name had a great Republican tradition, and had been on the side of the light in the Panama affair. If there were any proofs of the innocence of Dreyfus, or any traces of illegality in the trial, Godefroy Cavaignac could be trusted to speak the truth, whatever it might be. He did indeed study the records, and his conclusion was a certainty as to Dreyfus' guilt, which he announced to the Chamber by reading from the tribune several

THE DREYFUS REVOLUTION

documents, one of which, from the pen of the Italian military attaché Panizzardi, was particularly incriminating for the accused. The movement for a retrial seemed to be checked just when it was believed to be winning.

This was 7th July 1898. Five weeks later Captain Cuignet, the officer appointed by the War Minister to investigate the case, discovered that the Panizzardi letter was apocryphal. Lieutenant-Colonel Henry, an officer in the Intelligence branch, confessed that he had forged it two years after the trial of Dreyfus, when the agitation for a retrial had been started, in order to be able to show a definite and exact document, as it were an abridged proof, which would dispense with the need for any other explanation. He denied having committed what could strictly be termed a forgery. Arrested like his adversary before him, Colonel Picquart, on a charge of falsification, Henry was taken to Mont-Valérien, and there on the next day, 11th August, he cut his throat.

The Dreyfusards were triumphant. They declared that the condemned man's innocence was proved. Here was the new fact necessary for a retrial, and Brisson pressed for an immediate opening of proceedings. On 3rd September Godefroy Cavaignac resigned his portfolio, on the grounds of his disagreement with the President of the Council, continuing to declare that Dreyfus was guilty.

Was this at last to be the end? The discovery of the Henry forgery, after all, may have undermined the general public confidence that the judicial process had

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

been regular, and thrown doubt on the sincerity or clear-sightedness of the General Staff; but it had no connection with the trial of 1894, because the apocryphal letter was of later date than the 1894 verdict and had not played any part in securing the conviction. Moreover, Captain Cuignet, who revealed the forgery and thereby gave evidence of his perspicacity and good faith, confirmed the authenticity of the other documents. Here again, therefore, was a strange position. The Henry forgery produced a powerful effect in furthering the hypothesis of innocence. Its judicial value was none. Neither of the two appeals could even take it into account. The Affair became more fevered. It was not abating.

Brisson had replaced Cavaignac by General Chanoine, who, after an incident provoked by Déroulède, resigned in the tribune of the Chamber on 26th October, declaring that his views on Dreyfus did not differ from those of his predecessors. Brisson affected to regard Chanoine as a factious general, and secured the passing of a motion declaring the supremacy of the civil power, an expression foreshadowing the 'Republican defence.' But when a motion calling upon the Government to suppress attacks on the army was passed in the same sitting, the ministry resigned.

Fear always explains more things than seems likely. The Left might be beginning to feel apprehensive of the nationalists, but the Chamber in the mass remained moderate, startled by the campaign of the Dreyfus partisans, which, through the allies it was obtaining, now took on a revolutionary aspect. At the outset the party of rehabilitation did not know where to look for

THE DREYFUS REVOLUTION

support. The Dreyfus family first appealed to the soldiers themselves, and encountered some who listened to their case—notably Colonel Picquart—which only resulted in an increase of nervous tension. It was natural that with the development of the Affair those who had influence at the moment should be solicited. Joseph Reinach recounts how the heads of Catholic organisations were approached. The champions of Dreyfus pointed out to them that, failing the forces of religion, they would be obliged to ask the help of the anti-clericals and Socialists, which would be moving a long way from the ‘new spirit.’ It was the old saying: ‘If I cannot bend the gods to my will, I shall stir up the denizens of Hell,’ which was converted into a strong threat of upsetting the apple-cart. If these advances were made to the Catholics, as seems quite probable, it is comprehensible that they showed no eagerness to embark on the adventure, and to part company with a Government which, under Méline, gave them so few reasons for complaint that the advent of a ‘clerical Republic’ no longer seemed an impossibility. Finally, to associate the Church with an enterprise inevitably directed against the heads of the army would have revived the old charges of Ultramontanism, and so seemed singularly imprudent.

It was easier for the Dreyfus party to enrol the advanced elements. The ‘professional agitators,’ as Joseph Reinach himself called them, were bound to make a ready response; and others, still ‘less pure,’ did not fail to join with them. In fact, the cause of Dreyfus came to

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

be espoused by all who could profit from disorder and all who had scores to pay off. The Socialists rallied solidly under Jaurès. Clemenceau had preceded them, guided by his instincts of the Republican foe of hierarchies, and by those of the outcast frantic with impatience to return to the arena. One affair obliterated another. Dreyfus washed out Panama. An influential journalist of the Left, Ranc, who had been guiding the old 'Republican Union' since the beginning of the regime, was the first to realise that here was a means of putting an end to the reign of the moderates. Joseph Reinach, again, says that the Affair 'propelled men into revolutionary socialism' who until then had stood far removed from such courses. The Affair became in effect a projectile. Justice and truth, which some idealists believed they were disinterestedly serving, were diverted towards less noble passions and very different ends. There was in particular an exploitation of the weariness which the country was beginning to feel after the efforts demanded of it for national defence. Gone were the days of patriotic fervour and the schoolboy battalions, when it was the mission of the Republic's teachers to inculcate the lesson that 'in every citizen there must be a soldier.' That enthusiasm was spent. Anti-militarism was born of the equal service for all, which sent into barracks all those men—writers, professors, intellectuals—who hated the life most bitterly and could voice their resentment, forcing them in pell-mell with those who did not suffer from it, or, if they did, could not say so. Renan had already said that he could not have endured a term of military service, and would

THE DREYFUS REVOLUTION

have deserted, or committed suicide. Anti-militarism was showing itself in literature. It only awaited an occasion to spread out into politics.

The moderates, forming the majority in the Chamber, took account of these circumstances, and appreciated the outcome of such an agitation. Charles Dupuy, recalled to power, saw its danger all the more clearly because just then a grave foreign complication occurred. His ministry was formed on 3rd November 1898, and immediately found itself facing an alarming problem. Since July an expedition setting out from the Congo, under the command of Captain Marchand, had been at Fashoda, on the Nile, after an epic journey across the African continent. It was the result of the colonial policy which had resumed its course since the Russian alliance. Through Fashoda the question of Egypt was reopened. Kitchener called upon the French to withdraw. Marchand would do nothing before receiving orders from his Government. To keep the French flag flying there meant certain war. The British fleet was already preparing to weigh anchor. The French Government yielded, and recalled Marchand.

The incident was another strain on French nerves. The army was being attacked in the persons of its leaders at the very moment when the need for unity and confidence was greatest. The Dreyfus party, whose polemicists, led by Clemenceau, insulted and jeered at the soldiers, day in, day out, was called 'the foreigners' party,' especially as the foreign press had almost un-animously adopted the theory of Dreyfus' innocence.

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

English gold—the old St. George's cavalry—was accused of subsidising the Dreyfusard 'syndicate.' In this connection Freycinet, back at the War Ministry, even gave informative details, which he later minimised. National sentiment felt a stimulus, and a kind of Boulanger fever without the shadow of Boulanger began to revive. The Radical Ligue des Droits de l'Homme confronted the Ligue de la Patrie Française and the Ligue des Patriotes. France was indeed sundered, with these two great camps ranged as in the time of the religious wars.

Like Michel de l'Hôpital between the Catholics and Protestants in the sixteenth century, Charles Dupuy now sought to hold the balance even between the parties, and to displease none. The Criminal Court of Appeal to which the request for a retrial was submitted showed signs of its partiality in favour of Dreyfus' witnesses. Dupuy tried to pacify feeling by passing a law of cession obliging the Court to give its opinion with a full meeting of the associated Courts. By way of compensation, Colonel Picquart, the idol of the Dreyfusards, was removed from the jurisdiction of his normal judges and the court martial was rejected as a presumption of antipathy. This measure was equally unavailing. Its only result was that the charges levelled against Picquart were never elucidated, whilst he was blamed for having slipped away from facing them in court.

This was the position when Félix Faure suddenly died, on 16th February 1899. Once again the reign of a President—the fifth—was cut short by accident, and so fortunately did this happen for some, so unfortunately

THE DREYFUS REVOLUTION

for others, that many refused to believe that his death was natural. Félix Faure was notoriously anti-Dreyfusard. His fine presence and elegant person were agreeable, and he had lent to the Presidency the character appropriate to the Conservative Republic, not far removed from the sound MacMahon qualities, with princely connections. This President might almost have reviewed the troops on horseback. He paid special attention to the army chiefs. Forty-eight hours after his death he was replaced, and the candidature of Méline was defeated in advance. The Congress of Versailles preferred to choose Emile Loubet, who had taken refuge in Senatorial honours since the Panama crisis and become the chosen man of the Left, although actually he cherished conservative feelings.

By appointing Loubet on Clemenceau's nomination, the majority in both Houses had chosen a policy. It inclined towards the Dreyfus party, towards Republican defence, towards the Left. It was apprehensive of nationalism, the new name for the Boulanger spirit in politics. It regarded the Leagues as dangerous, and Loubet, in virtue of his opportunist past, as a safe man.

Paris felt this election as an insult and a challenge. The new President entered the Elysée greeted by shouts of 'Panama!' Clearly, a new period and a new policy were beginning. Paul Déroulède tried forcible opposition. On the afternoon of 23rd February, after the funeral of Félix Faure, counting on support from the army and the street crowds, he made a melodramatic attempt at a *coup d'état*. Seizing the bridle of General Roget's horse, at the head of the troops returning from the funeral, he

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

tried to convince this officer, a particular bugbear of the Dreyfusards, to march on the Elysée. The General refused, and had Déroulède arrested. Three months later he was acquitted.

The attitude of the military element in this brief adventure had been perfectly correct. When Commandant Marchand returned to France shortly afterwards, he too kept aloof from cheering admirers. No new Boulanger held the stage, and yet the Republicans were alarmed by the very grounds which they gave nationalism for showing its feelings. On 3rd June the Court of Appeal ordered the retrial of the Dreyfus case on grounds other than those of the Henry forgery. It admitted the ground of the communication to the judges in 1894 of a secret document, 'considered' as being inapplicable to the condemned man, and the attribution of the *bordereau* to 'another officer.' On the same day Esterhazy, still a refugee in England, declared himself to be the real author of the *bordereau*, though giving contradictory and even absurd evidence; no doubt he had actually written the document, but he had done so 'under orders,' and the real culprit was Dreyfus. The latter, meanwhile, was brought back from his place of detention on Devil's Island, and was to appear before a new court martial which would meet at Rennes.

This decision of the Court was a success for the Dreyfusards, and brought them a flood of adherents. Dupuy himself crossed to their side with unconvincing haste, which redoubled the excitement in Paris. On

THE DREYFUS REVOLUTION

4th June, booed by the crowd at the Auteuil races, President Loubet was slapped by a spectator, Baron de Christiani, whose title gave rise to alarms about an aristocrats' plot. A week later Dupuy's ministry was overturned. He was felt to be too flaccid, and the regime felt itself endangered. Waldeck-Rousseau was chosen to form a Government of Republican defence.

Waldeck-Rousseau liked to style himself a Conservative Republican, and had entered political life in the days of Gambetta and Ferry, when memories of the Sixteenth of May were still vivid. From this period he retained two principles: first, that clericalism was the enemy, and then, that to oppose clericalism a union of all Republicans, even the most advanced, was essential in cases of urgency. He attributed enormous influence to the religious orders, especially to the Assumptionists, who were, however, obedient to the orders of Leo XIII and active champions of the rallying of Catholics to the regime. So far as can be judged at a distance, Waldeck-Rousseau had concocted a terrifying picture of leagued monks plotting to fill the army with their pupils, imbuing the body of army officers with fanatical ideas, and thus gaining hold of the State. In defiance of his solid middle-class habits, he sought the aid of the revolutionaries, which he did not deem superfluous in battling against this hydra. The most perspicacious member of his cabinet was Alexandre Millerand, the bogey of the propertied classes, although General de Gallifet, the executioner of the Communards, sat alongside him in this curious combination, chosen to counteract apprehension.

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

When Waldeck-Rousseau died in 1904, he begged his friends to bear witness that he had never been a Socialist, nor merely Radical. He was the man required to snatch the Republic from the moderates' grip. With him, and through the Dreyfus affair, returned the years of battle during which the regime followed a truly Republican course. All that had been done to modify democracy, to stem its excesses and to mitigate its perils, was abandoned. To make this reversion to 1880 acceptable a man was again needed who would be reassuring in his mode of life, his connections, his demeanour. Men of standing like himself followed him in those feelings which, at the time of the Sixteenth of May, had brought about the union of all Republicans. But circumstances had altered, but at the moment this was not appreciated. The Dreyfus affair was restoring power to the Left, to a degree never known before. It opened the doors wide to the 'radicalism' which Grévy had stifled. It brought about a revolution.

Furthermore, the Affair still dragged on. It remained, as it were, a principle of agitation, and when Waldeck-Rousseau entered to put an end to it, everything seemed to conspire to prolong it. The Rennes court martial was to deliver the definitive judgment, to which both parties had only to bow. Light was sought in the battle, and there lay the means of making it shine forth. Who had committed the act of treason? Dreyfus was accused of it. Esterhazy said: 'It was I who wrote the *bordereau*.' To confront the two men and compare their culpability seems now the obvious solution of the problem, as the problem lay in a choice between two accused. Esterhazy

THE DREYFUS REVOLUTION

was summoned as a witness. But he remained in London, and did not reply to the calling of his name. What strange tacit agreement made both parties accept his absence? When the Government prosecutor proposed to take no further notice, Demange, the counsel defending Dreyfus, stated that he had no observations to make, and with no further protest on his part the Court decided that Esterhazy's evidence was not indispensable to the elucidation of the truth. Thus, one man declared his innocence, urging that he had not written the famous document of which another proclaimed himself the author; his trial was reviewed on grounds of which the principal one was this; and his advocate did not insist on hearing the *confitentem reum*, as if this confession did not deserve consideration, as if it were not genuine, as if it did not exist. This is what seems to us, in retrospect, amazing. It is still more amazing that it did not surprise contemporaries.

In retrospect again, it looks to us as if the champions of Alfred Dreyfus' innocence were more concerned with showing that Dreyfus was not the perpetrator of the crime than with establishing that the crime was committed by somebody else. Demange was satisfied with a plea of doubt. It is incomprehensible that there should have been any need to clear Dreyfus and oppose the charges against him, if it was indisputable that Esterhazy had written the *bordereau*, since the guilt of Esterhazy implied the innocence of Dreyfus. But the condemned man of 1894, although present at Rennes in person, was always a 'symbol.' The two camps faced one another at Rennes, which was flooded with Dreyfusards and anti-

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

Dreyfusards, still confronting their general ideas and their theories over and above the questions of fact which the witnesses for the prosecution kept bringing back before the judges, demonstrating now, as they had demonstrated in 1894, that the traitor could only be an artillery officer, a Staff officer, an officer going through his Staff course. By five votes to two the court martial again found Dreyfus guilty.

But while they condemned him, the military judges wished to assuage matters. They granted 'mitigating circumstances' and modified the penalty. Waldeck-Rousseau had expected an acquittal, and was gloomily vexed by this verdict. He retorted by granting a pardon, which was immediately signed by President Loubet. Dreyfus accepted it and dropped his application for appeal. Everything seemed to be over. Gallifet officially declared to the army that 'the incident was closed.'

It was not an incident. For years the Dreyfus affair had transcended the person of Alfred Dreyfus. It continued when it had ceased to interest the public, and Dreyfus himself no longer interested his friends. It was never to finish. The party of the condemned man did not disarm. The Affair which had given it power enabled it to retain that power and to work reprisals. In order to foment still further the revolutionary agitation which had been so profitable to the advanced groups, Jaurès pursued a campaign for rehabilitation with the same tenacity which had already brought about the retrial. Seven years after the Rennes verdict he obtained a decree quashing it, which declared

THE DREYFUS REVOLUTION

Dreyfus to be innocent, although recognising that in 1894 a 'grave crime' had been committed, without it being legally established that Esterhazy was the guilty man. The Court had freed the man found guilty at Rennes from having to appear before a third court martial only by altering the law and by renouncing its own jurisdiction. The anti-Dreyfusards protested, but the sincere Dreyfusards deplored. It was the latter who sought the full and open rehabilitation of the victim by the same tribunals which had twice condemned him, and the 'grave crime' which had set France on fire was submerged in the mass of legal formulas which really reiterated its existence. Things had moved a long way from the judicial drama. Several of the participants therein had already shifted their allegiance. The quarrel has gone on even to our own day. The decisive revelation expected from Berlin has not been vouchsafed. The published memoirs of Schwartzkoppen still admit of contradictory presumptions.

What eludes discussion is the consequences of the Dreyfus affair. And to understand its epoch neither public actions nor public speeches nor the pronouncements of ministers need be searched for significance. Only the writers of the time disentangle and fix the general sense of its events. In 1904, commemorating the death of Zola, Anatole France, who had fought in the Dreyfusard ranks and reached socialism through the avenues of the Affair, said: 'The Dreyfus affair rendered our country the inestimable service of gradually confronting and revealing the forces of the past and the forces of the future: on one side, the authoritarianism of

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

the propertied classes and Catholic theocracy, on the other, socialism and free thought.' In less oratorical terms, the Dreyfus affair ruined the rule of the moderates and the Conservative Republic, the 'new spirit,' as well as the military organisation of Freycinet. It led to the advent of that 'radicalism' which the wisest of the Republicans had feared and kept in check. Within the structure of the Republic it had induced a revolution which threatened a general dissolution. War might have come upon the country in a state of utter disintegration, exposing the regime to the worst of disasters, that which in the course of history has delivered other democracies to foreign onslaughts, if time had not been granted to a few men who, standing on what survived, rebuilt the foundations of the shattered breakwater. All that the old guardians of the regime had done had now to be started again, and the plan in which they had succeeded would one day have to be resumed under far more difficult conditions, which, this time, would make success dubious.

CHAPTER X

WALDECK-ROUSSEAU, COMBES, DELCASSÉ

WALDECK-ROUSSEAU showed what it meant to be a President of the Council endowed with prestige, a real Prime Minister. And he brought everything lower than ten feeble ministries would have done.

This frigid man, with his imposing affectation of silence and disdain, produced the effect of being a statesman because he had the tricks of one. He has given good grounds for doubting the extent of his intelligence, because he was astonished by the consequences of his policy. When he opened the door to radicalism and socialism he was doing what he did not wish, and what he had not foreseen.

In order to stretch the net of his majority over to the farthest Left he raised a cry of 'The Republic in danger!' Was this danger so certain? The High Court before which he brought a number of Royalists and Nationalists did not succeed in proving the existence of a plot with the army chiefs. The trial even showed that the adversaries of the regime were so divided amongst themselves that Paul Déroulède and André Buffet, both sentenced to the penalty of exile, fought a duel. The anti-Semite Guérin had for some time entrenched himself in a fortified house in the rue Chabrol, in order to

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

resist a warrant for his arrest. The Parisians crowded to see his 'fort' out of curiosity, and in the end he surrendered with police connivance. Such was the agitation which alarmed Waldeck-Rousseau, and was invoked by him to justify the formation of the Republican *Bloc*.

It was not to be long before death removed him, and illness was exacerbating his obsessions. And it may also be felt that in spite of his success at the Bar, his life in the capital, and his fashionable connections, he retained the prejudices of the provinces. The opposition of Paris vexed him more than anything else. The capital, even in its tradesmen's and middle-class districts, had long been Radical in temper, and anti-clericalism held the field in municipal politics. The Dreyfus affair completed what the Boulanger episode had begun. When the Conservatives and Nationalists gained control of the municipal council of Paris in 1900, Waldeck-Rousseau was as furious as a 'blue' of his native city, Nantes, when it was attacked by the Chouans.

Loyal to old observance and old fashion, he remained in many respects well behind his century. He was a Liberal of the Restoration, a Voltairean bourgeois of Louis-Philippe's day. Those were times when priests could be fought quite safely, and the sword could, without danger, be made to yield to the toga. But what had been safe with a property franchise was so no longer with this universal suffrage, which indeed had greatly altered since the Sixteenth of May. Republican ideas had not only broken into the old Conservative masses. The generation now growing into manhood had been moulded in the schools of Jules Ferry, and socialism had been

WALDECK-ROUSSEAU, COMBES, DELCASSÉ

making great strides. Electorally, the country was not quite the same as in 1877. It was no longer safe to apply the motto, 'No enemies on the Left.' And certainly the circumspect Republicans should not fall back on it except in absolute necessity, and this necessity was disputable. Waldeck-Rousseau's mistake was in failing to appreciate the changed conditions. He blamed the defection of the Right Centre for his action in turning to the extreme Left. But the men of the former group had broken with him because his real alliances were already determined by fear of militarism and clericalism, which he believed to be banded in an unholy conspiracy. And it was impossible to strike at generals or keep the body of officers under suspicion without weakening the army's discipline. Nor could the religious orders be assailed without declaring war on the Church and so ruining the Concordat.

Perhaps Waldeck-Rousseau distrusted the soldiers even more than the monks. A day came when, in the Chamber, he used the word 'felony' with reference to an officer whose evidence had displeased him, and Gallifet handed in his resignation. Waldeck-Rousseau hastened to replace him by General André, who had been representing himself, though not for long, as the only Republican among the high command. The choice was more temperamental than clear-sighted, as General André was another of those who were to go much further than the head of the Government desired.

Only two matters were carefully handled. Foreign Affairs remained in the hands of Delcassé, who pursued

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

his line of policy silently and apart, as if in ignorance of what was happening around him. And finance was entrusted to the son of one of the ministers of the Sixteenth of May, reared in Conservative traditions and widely known in wealthy circles—Joseph Caillaux. With Caillaux there, the ministry would not lose the tone of the boards of directors, the spirit of the Bank of France. The regime was held to the lines of the wealthy middle classes, with just a trace of fashionable airiness and modernity.

As soon as money was left untampered with, the middle classes were reassured. A few unpleasant incidents occurred, such as the festivity of the 'Triumph of the Republic,' when the Red Flag was hoisted. President Loubet left his stand when the 'rag of civil war' was displayed, and this silent protest sufficed to placate anxiety. People argued that the votes of the extreme Left were accepted for the maintenance of the ministry without such a trifle imperilling society. Millerand undertook reforms which were socialistic in spirit; but these were put forward as kindly concessions which would pacify the working classes and weaken socialism by dividing it, because the most revolutionary Socialists refused assistance to a bourgeois Government, and conveyed to it the 'curses of the proletariat.'

A conception of Conservative reform was the basic illusion in Waldeck-Rousseau. In agreement with him, Millerand favoured the development of trade union activities, and of the labour exchanges destined to become educational establishments for 'toiling democracy.' An ingenuous picture was conjured up of good and wise workmen in these popular institutes, fulfilling

WALDECK-ROUSSEAU, COMBES, DELCASSÉ

‘their apprenticeship as members of a corporation and as citizens.’ This pretty fancy did not foresee the development of the *Confédération Générale du Travail*, the powerful organisation of the trade union movement, nor the extension of its activities to State functionaries, defying the public power; it did not allow for the expansion, from this small beginning of forces which would ultimately enfeeble the State and expose the Republic itself to unimagined dangers. Waldeck-Rousseau’s dominating idea was to endow the Republican regime with a law concerning the right of forming associations. Here, too, he saw himself as a wise and generous reformer. The question, as he viewed it, was one of allowing Frenchmen to form associations for good purposes, not for bad: the judge of good and bad being the Government. There would be good lay associations, holding rights of ownership, which would give their members the benefits of property, and attach them to the social order. There would even be good religious associations, duly authorised by the Government, whilst the others, declared bad, would be forbidden. Once again, in Waldeck-Rousseau, these were the ideas of a Restoration Liberal claiming to exercise a kingly right, reducing the regular clergy to the same status as the secular clergy, muzzling both, and incidentally suppressing the religious orders whose activity caused offence to the State. Such had been the case for the Jesuits in the time of the Monarchy, a precedent which Waldeck-Rousseau, following Jules Ferry, did not fail to cite. He had a particular hatred of the Assumptionist Fathers, and was fully resolved to forbid them also. There he

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

was disposed to stop, content to put an end to the monks who 'interfered' in worldly matters and the 'leagued monks' who obsessed his thoughts, whilst the others would be controlled and supervised. Far from contemplating an abandonment of the Concordat, he was concerned to have it extended to those orders which were in direct dependence on the Pope. The religious orders were not even mentioned, so much was Waldeck-Rousseau occupied with a generalised legislation.

The weakness of his political judgment was exposed as soon as the project came before the Chambers. Waldeck-Rousseau was incapable of stemming the current he had created. The amendments added to his law changed its whole character, and he had to submit to them. Enslaved by his extreme Left allies, he abandoned all the barriers against associations formed by revolutionaries, and all the facilities offered to Catholics to make such associations. As he had often referred to the conflict between the two rising generations who had received differing educations, he was enjoined to suppress the principle of freedom in education. He had sown the wind of anti-clericalism and was astounded to be reaping the storm.

He went further. The general elections took place in 1902. As Prime Minister and Minister for the Interior, he placed the prestige of the administration at the service of the Republican *Bloc*. He recognised no enemies on the Left. And although he could rejoice in the victory won, it was not for long.

Before this polling, a Jesuit preacher at Lourdes had threatened the foes of religion with 'the electoral sword.' 'Into battle!' he exclaimed, ' . . . under the standard of

WALDECK-ROUSSEAU, COMBES, DELCASSÉ

the Sacred Heart!’ The Protestant historian Seignobos speaks indignantly of this ‘battle-cry,’ which we cannot but find naïve. Leo XIII, deeply grieved by the setback given to the process of reconciliation between Church and State, also believed in salvation through the ballot. He had further embarrassed Waldeck-Rousseau by instructing Catholics to abstain, and renewing for France the rule of *non expedit* which he applied in Italy. The battle was a close and, on both sides, a bitter engagement. Over the whole country the Left mustered only 200,000 votes more than the Right and the moderates. The system of constituency voting converted this small general majority into a large, compact, ardent majority in the Chamber of Deputies. Something long avoided was now accomplished. Radicalism came into power, and did so victoriously, with all its programme and demands, in alliance with the Socialists and subject to their spur. And to reach this state of affairs it had needed no less than a Conservative Republican like Waldeck-Rousseau!

He himself still kept a reflection of his former moderation. Only one bad step remained for him to take, and he took it. Worn out, and perhaps secretly disgusted, he retired from power without awaiting the meeting of the new Chamber. So great was his prestige with the Republican *Bloc* that he was asked to name his successor. After refusals from Léon Bourgeois and Brisson, his choice fell on Émile Combes. Waldeck-Rousseau’s most cherished task was the law of the associations, and as Combes had defended it in the Senate he seemed the most worthy to take over responsibility. He adopted Combes, and thereby produced one of those unexpected

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

results which adoption sometimes produced in the times of the Cæsars.

Forty million Frenchmen offer a great variety of human types. Emile Combes had been reared in a seminary and was learned in theology, one of those 'originals' who are only to be found in the provinces. Waldeck-Rousseau did not suspect that he was handing over the government to a man with a monomania. Combes was erudite in Canon Law and in Church history. A thwarted priest, he could think of nothing but the fight against the Church party, and his accession to power gave him the opening for a historic contest with the Papacy, in which he flattered himself that he would dazzle with his learning. As a young seminarist, no doubt, he dreamed now of being a Father of the Church, now of fighting a new battle of the Investitures, of being St. Bernard or John Huss, Bossuet or Luther. The Republic fell into the hands of a heretical theologian who frequently amazed the Chamber by his professions of spiritualistic faith.

His fixed idea, which made him indifferent to anything not concerned with religion, produced strange effects. Each minister was master in his own department, and gave full play to his pet notions. General André, completing the dispersal of the old General Staff, set himself the task of republicanising the army and recording the names of officers who went to Mass. A whimsical bohemian named Camille Pelletan, entrusted with the navy, turned it upside down, and gave the names of philosophers to battleships. But Delcassé, no less isolated in his ministry, was weaving a defensive

WALDECK-ROUSSEAU, COMBES, DELCASSÉ coalition against Germany. And Rouvier, in charge of finances, handled them in such a way as not to pain the great bankers or worry the ordinary investor. Combes, in private conversation with hostile moderates, would say: 'Why do you hate me? Do I bear a grudge against property? Are we touching your fortunes?'

The real Government was the delegation of the Left, formed of the Radical groups in conjunction with the Socialists and dominated by Jean Jaurès. A stable majority was thus secured, a long term of office likewise, and it was seen that this state of affairs was not necessarily a good one.

Combes was possessed of a sort of fury. Stimulated by fanatic applause, he seemed to envisage the destruction of Catholicism in France. He had found the law of associations ready-made, and it was left for him to apply it. It included certain safeguards and certain promises for the religious orders. Requests for authorisation were to be investigated singly. But, except for a few congregations exempted on the grounds of the useful character, Combes decided that refusal should be made *en masse*. The original idea was thrown into the background, and the spirit of the law violated. Often enough it had been declared that the question was solely one of defending the Republic, civil society, and freedom with these. Common rights had been measured out carefully to monks, but had not been confiscated. Emile Combes seized them outright. He shamelessly flaunted the formal promises. Loud protests were raised. Waldeck-Rousseau, a dying man, mounted the tribune of the Senate to testify that this was not what he had desired.

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

He renounced his successor, and called upon him to respect pledges duly given. He was himself alarmed by his own work, by all that he felt to be approaching. But he could hardly even moderate the fury of the proscribing zealots.

His last efforts were directed to safeguarding the Senate from delegation of the Left, and to saving the autonomy of that body, in which he placed a last hope of Conservative forces. Other men, also, took fright too late, and viewed all this destruction and ravaging with consternation. Repentance was rife, and more than one conversion came to a head.

Secretly, the President of the Republic was not the least alarmed. Loubet had been elected with no acclamation, and lacked the authority to make his voice heard; but he had a mind of his own. He retained the inheritance of the old Opportunists, and within the narrow scope allowed him, he exercised a moderating influence. Clemenceau, rebuffed by the universal suffrage from the Chamber, returned to public life in the Senate, where he found a seat through the Dreyfus affair, through which he foresaw the advent of the 'maximum Republic.' His name was still a synonym for violence and excess, and Loubet confided in his intimates: 'Clemenceau will never be a minister so long as I am in the Elysée.' But there was one danger especially which Loubet would have liked to guard against. It was becoming clear that Emile Combes was seeking a conflict with the Papacy. He may still have been hesitating to denounce the Concordat and restore freedom to the Church; but Separation remained part of the Radical programme, although the Republicans had always eluded the issue.

WALDECK-ROUSSEAU, COMBES, DELCASSÉ

So long as Leo XIII was alive, the Republic felt obliged to remain on courteous terms with that Pontiff, in token of the arrangements reached with him in the past. But Pope Leo had just died. A blank page was opened with the new Pontificate, and Combes had it in mind to seek grounds for a spectacular quarrel. The rupture with the Holy See, carefully staged beforehand, was initiated by an official visit to the King of Italy. By affecting to ignore the Vatican, one was sure to provoke a protest from the Holy Father, as Pope Pius X followed his predecessor in maintaining the Papal claim to temporal power. The trap was skilfully laid. Delcassé himself invoked a reason of national interest, and declared that the maintenance of the Concordat was not so valuable as the friendship of Italy. A choice had to be made between offending the Papacy and offending Italy; and so far as French interests were concerned the choice was ready made. Vainly did Loubet struggle to extricate himself from the necessity of this visit to Rome, exhorted to do so by his pious wife. In private conversation he declared his 'horror' at the religious policy of Combes; but he had to resign himself to what was demanded of him.

Combes knew perfectly well that neither Pius X nor any other Pope could renounce the principle of temporal power. The Vatican's protest was an unquestionable certainty. Pius X had addressed it in confidence to the Catholic governments, and his letter was communicated to Jaurès's newspaper by the Prince of Monaco, who, by a freak of that era, was sympathetic with the Left and a Dreyfusard. Here again was the affair cropping up. Thanks to that, Émile Combes had the motive for a break with the Church.

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

Nevertheless, in the very hour of denouncing the Concordat, doubts arose as to whether it was prudent to throw away so serviceable an instrument, and then enter on a struggle with the clergy and all the faithful, whilst suppressing the chief component of that State anti-clericalism which had been proved to have such electoral value. There was a conflict between the desire to crush the old 'enemy,' the wish to retain the argument of the 'clerical peril,' and some fear of provoking a religious war, since the expulsion of the religious orders had already roused resistance more pronounced than in the days even of Ferry. Men remembered also the view of the old Republicans, such as Grévy, to whom Separation was 'an insanity.' With the brake of all kinds of habits and memories in action, there was a reluctance to rush things. During this respite Combes found still more to enjoy himself with. The affair of the two bishops enabled this zealous canonist to carry on a controversy regarding the *nobis nominavit* which had a richly mediæval flavour. The Concordat did not withstand it. Before long the rupture of diplomatic relations with the Pope was brought to pass.

By now the year 1904 was nearly over. Many Republicans were in alarm over the work of ruin. Two prolonged ministries, and stable majorities, had caused disorders far deeper than a succession of ephemeral governments. The separation of Church and State was drawing near. The military law of 1889 was threatened, and, like the Concordat, had not long to live. Socialism was permeating the laws, and syndicalism of revolutionary character was being organised. How could the

WALDECK-ROUSSEAU, COMBES, DELCASSÉ

country recover its footing on so steep a descent? The Radical-Socialist party had taken a firm grip of power by practising the simple maxim that place and favour could be granted only to those who were its friends, a method of governance which had formerly made the strength of the Second Empire. Meanwhile the radical committees controlled the *préfets*. 'Delegates' or 'administrative correspondents' were substituted for the duly elected members in refractory constituencies. A closely woven net was spread, and the opportunists, the moderates who had followed Waldeck-Rousseau, woke up too late. They found themselves being hunted out of the Republic, as formerly they had driven out the Conservatives, and they in their turn spoke as the representatives of the 'moral order.' Labori, one of Dreyfus's defending counsel, repented. Confronted by the financial scandals then beginning, and by the pillaging of the funds of the religious orders: 'We have seen the outcome of these events in the most complete moral anarchy known in this country for perhaps half a century.' Waldeck-Rousseau even compared himself to the philosopher drawing his cloak over his eyes to die.

Regrets were useless. The destruction had been wrought and the Combes regime was to leave ineffaceable scars.

It did not even perish from the damage it had brought about. It might possibly have lasted longer if it had not outraged honour. It achieved the foulness of encouraging spies and spying, and carried this into the army. Yet it was Waldeck-Rousseau who had chosen General

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

André, whose methods of secretly investigating the opinions of officers roused disgust. André continued the systematic purging of the body of officers where Waldeck-Rousseau had struck his blow in anger. The older Republicans could no longer recognise their Republic in a system where 'anonymous and authorised espionage' was widespread. Radicals declared that radicalism was dishonouring its name. 'In what cavern do we now find ourselves?' exclaimed Paul Doumer when André boasted of accepting the aid of Freemasonry in his task. Men who had hitherto approved of everything were furious, and Millerand made many feel ashamed by his remark about 'abject domination.' Harsh words were not enough. One act clinched the matter. André, in his seat in the Chamber, was openly struck by the Nationalist deputy Syveton. A few days later he resigned, but Syveton died in mysterious circumstances on the eve of his appearance in the criminal courts. The Combes ministry survived a couple of months longer, and then, weakened by the defeat of Brisson and the election of Paul Doumer to the Presidency of the Chamber, fell on 19th January 1905. It was like a baser form of the Ninth of Thermidor, with Rouvier in the part of Barras.

The Revolution had continued after the death of Robespierre. Radicalism went on after the fall of Combes. Rouvier, whose materialism was crude, had retained from his entry into politics, during a time that already seemed far distant, the idea that anything could be done if moneyed interests were tactfully handled. Recent events showed him that although the use of informers had offended sensitive consciences, and although opinion,

WALDECK-ROUSSEAU, COMBES, DELCASSÉ

even in the Chamber, had hardened against these ugly methods of government, the great mass of electors was not affected by these things. Crude instincts were perhaps even flattered by them. All in all, the ordinary run of men was satisfied. The idealism of priest and soldier is totally foreign to the rustic mind, and the horizon of politics became that of the village pump. To Rouvier, a man of stock exchange and business deals, proud of having shelved the income-tax proposals, only the moneyed interests had any importance. He was in everything attuned to vulgar views. He inherited the project of the separation of Church and State; the tradition of anti-clericalism conceived as a tool of government suited him admirably. He inherited also military legislation which destroyed the law of 1889, and the modification of the period of service to two years was one of those convenient gifts certain of vulgar appreciation. In both Houses the vote was almost unanimous. Freycinet himself shattered the work of Freycinet.

The two years law was passed in February 1905. The debates on the Separation law began in March. And while these matters were in hand, a storm was gathering.

It is philistine and boorish to ignore the outside world. Combes would regard it only in Ultramontane aspects, but Rouvier viewed it only in the light of banking. Neither concerned himself with foreign policy proper, which they left to Delcassé. Théophile Delcassé was highly orthodox as regards Dreyfus and the Pope, and did not concern himself with what his colleagues did any more than they concerned themselves about him. Isolated in his study at the Quai d'Orsay, he worked for

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

the France that does not alter or perish. His idea was simple, and therefore strong. Convinced that Germany sought war, he sought allies, numerous allies, as many allies as possible. Then, when this inevitable war came upon the world, Alsace-Lorraine would again be French. Secretive and obstinate, Delcassé was a Radical of the generation which had not renounced the lost provinces. That is, it was said of the Waldeck-Rousseau and Combes ministries that their home policy was a Dreyfus one, their foreign policy one of Déroulède. Delcassé was asked once how he had reconciled these opposites, and he answered, in the hearing of the present author: 'I stayed on so that foreign affairs should not be treated as André had handled the army and Pelletan the navy.'

France could count about thirty thousand families with military traditions, who maintained the supply of officers for the army. A long tradition of public service maintained a picked personnel in the government offices. The ravages of democracy were thus not only withstood. Devotion, character, and intelligence were all appealed to by conceptions of a national task. There was a group also of great ambassadors, Paul and Jules Cambon, Camille Barrère, Paul Revoil, and others as well, prepared to work in with Delcassé's ideas and lend their aid to that doggedly resolute man. Thus it came about that during these years of ignominious degradation at home France acquired alliances, and an Empire, abroad. The detachment of Italy from the Triple Alliance; the effacement of a century and a half of colonial rivalry with England; the comprehension of the ideas of Edward VII and the Entente springing from the German

WALDECK-ROUSSEAU, COMBES, DELCASSÉ

danger; the protectorate of Morocco completing the project of a French North Africa—such were the unforeseen results of the free hand left to Théophile Delcassé by Waldeck-Rousseau and Combes.

For the Republic these consequences were also fortunate. The conquest of Morocco amplified the benefits it had already reaped from colonial expansion, enhancing the prestige of the regime, excusing many things otherwise intolerable, preventing the active and high-minded elements in the nation from going into merciless opposition, and enabling these to show their gifts as conquerors and administrators. Just as Galliéni had created Madagascar, so Lyautey was about to create Morocco. Greatness had not utterly perished, and politics of the most rascally class found itself associated with a great creative work. Thus, as Renan had said, the most dense Bœotian may support by his taxes the literature, science, and art of which he himself feels no need.

The alliances envisaged by Delcassé were likewise deeply satisfying to the patriotic sense. They were to become a matter of pride to the Republic before being an instrument of safety. But there was a turn of the drama when they very nearly collapsed, with Delcassé himself.

The year 1905 was critical. Russia, in her war with Japan, was suffering reverses which not only affected the prestige of the colossus but revealed its weakness. As a result, the Imperial regime was threatened by revolution, which gravely diminished the political and military value of the Franco-Russian alliance. Before Russia had recovered her strength, Germany was tempted to bring

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

matters to a head, and to smash the circle formed by the Entente between France and England and Italy. On the other hand, by their agreement for the disposal of Morocco, the French and British Governments had furnished German policy with a grievance. On 31st March 1905, instigated by his Chancellor, the Emperor William II landed at Tangier and asserted the rights of Germany. War loomed ahead precisely when the enemy had grounds for believing that France was demoralised and the fruit ripe for picking.

With fearless tenacity, and trusting in King Edward's word, Delcassé stood firm while his colleagues took fright and prepared to sacrifice him. German emissaries arrived in Paris urging that Delcassé's tenure of office was imperilling peace. In the Chamber and in the Senate the minister, now regarded as an instigator of war, was greeted with hostility. Abandoned, betrayed even by Rouvier, and several times on the verge of resigning, Delcassé stiffened himself. On 6th June, after a threatening move made by the German ambassador, Rouvier hotly blamed the author of this alliance with Britain, which, he said in the course of a pitiable meeting of the Council, was a provocation and challenge to Germany. He also accused him, strangely, of having 'debauched Italy.' The plan pursued in solitude by Delcassé was condemned, the alliances were gainsaid. None of the ministers raised a voice. President Loubet remained mute. Nobody defended the solitary champion of patriotism, this man who had emerged from remote Ariège with neither a past nor traditions, who had reached the Chamber and attained power by obscure

WALDECK-ROUSSEAU, COMBES, DELCASSÉ

toil in the radical newspapers. In him burned the sense of nationality, and he had wrought a great policy in days of pettiness. He was dismissed with contumely. A French minister was turned out of office at the orders of a foreign Power. It was described by a young journalist named André Tardieu as 'an unprecedented humiliation.' The phrase struck home. A sense of shame was aroused. If only through the birth of this feeling, the sacrifice of Delcassé was not in vain. And even if further abasements were to come, this at least was the lowest point touched.

Four days later came the rejoinder to this scene. Rouvier was acting as interim Foreign Minister, and was again visited by the German ambassador, who requested him to submit the rights of France over Morocco to a general conference. The disavowal of Delcassé and the refusal to fall back on the British alliance had thus resulted only in making Germany more exigent. According to the account of Paléologue, then head of the permanent staff at the Quai d'Orsay, Rouvier was 'thunderstruck' by this revelation.

The situation was indeed dramatic. A return to Delcassé's foreign policy was necessitated. To be forearmed against Germany, to avoid remaining in deadly *tête-à-tête* with her, there was no other path to follow than that of the alliances. But internal politics were ineluctably clamped to the line traced by Waldeck-Rousseau and Combes, and led in all things to abandonment and to weakened efforts. Rouvier's sense of reality was not blind to the fact that the day when this contradiction was resolved would be a day of terror.

CHAPTER XI

THE BRAKE ON CATASTROPHE

THE sixth Presidency was coming to an end. Loubet, as the journal of his secretary, Abel Combarieu, shows, was congratulating himself on his seven years' tenure, and on having fulfilled his duties as best he could in difficult times. Above all, he had striven to further the policy of the alliances and to maintain good relations with the Tsar and King Edward. But he had refrained from defending Delcassé; and if the policy of the Republican *Bloc* caused him anxiety, he had not voiced it. He had effaced himself behind Waldeck-Rousseau and Combes. These domineering ministers had still further diminished the President's authority.

After the passage of the law for two years' military service, a Senator, General Billot, invoked the constitutional right of the President of the Republic to demand a second deliberation. He was sharply interrupted by the President of the Senate, who exclaimed: 'The head of the State must not be brought into this discussion, and must certainly not be appealed to in opposition to the express will of the Chambers.' This pronouncement denied a right and a duty of the Presidency, but it was in line with the tendency of years past to make the President only a figurehead, or at most to

THE BRAKE ON CATASTROPHE

grant him a share of influence in the Council if he was capable of taking it. The President of the Senate who thus stated so clearly that executive power must yield to legislative power was Armand Fallières. He was nominating himself for the succession to Émile Loubet.

Here was another opportunist of moderate tendencies, a comfortably situated man of property, a lesser Jules Grévy. His opponent was Paul Doumer, a self-made Radical of modest origins, whose eyes had been opened to the dangers besetting France. By speaking of 'public safety' Doumer gave the impression of aspiring to the Consulate, and the Left rallied against him at the bidding of Clemenceau, who had previously given the investiture to Loubet and now gave it to Fallières. If passive, dull, but generally reassuring Presidency was wanted, none better could be found than an old-style Republican, and the choice marked a return towards midway courses. Fallières did not fail in his predecessors' traditions. Like them, he promised 'the protection of all rights, the safeguarding of all liberties.'

This idea inspired the first ministry that he formed. Rouvier had fallen in the midst of the troubled incidents. The application of the law of Separation was not so easy as passing it, and Catholic resistance began to show that things had been pushed too far. Although the Concordat had been destroyed without an attempt to come to terms with the Pope, neither the clergy nor the faithful had been abolished. A *modus vivendi* had to be found for them. And there was now some astonishment at the Pope's refusal to compromise. A new civil constitution of the clergy seemed to lurk beneath the reli-

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

gious associations, and clashed with the refusal of Pius x, who sacrificed the proposed restitution of ecclesiastical property to preserve the unity and purity of the Church. But the advocate of this law—indeed its chief author—was not a man of the Combes stamp. He was totally ignorant of Church history, of Canon Law, of everything religious. His name was Aristide Briand.

Emerging from revolutionary socialism, quick to grasp at circumstances, Briand was ambitious for a fine career and had no fanatical feeling. He applied his skill to satisfying the anti-clericals and making the law acceptable to the Catholics. He was probably more surprised than anyone when an act of procedure, intended to prevent misappropriation of ecclesiastical objects and furnishings, was regarded by the faithful as a profanation. The reception given to this law for the taking of inventories showed that the sense of sacredness had been ignored; it had given the tangible evidence of a violation of conscience. Believers mustered to protect the tabernacles. Blood was spilt. To push things to a logical conclusion would mean a religious war. In the end the inventories were dropped, in the face of a growing agitation. Unbelief excused its retreat with Clemenceau's jeer that 'totting up vases and candlesticks wasn't worth one human life.'

Deep down men felt that everything was crumbling. The advent of a true democracy was producing the results so long dreaded. Disorder was creeping in everywhere, penetrating this State set at defiance by its own servants. It was still correct to denounce the activities

THE BRAKE ON CATASTROPHE

of reaction when already public authority was sapped by revolutionary syndicalism. Anti-militarism was undermining the army. Even the finances were beginning to show signs of collapse. The necessity of providing for the elementary needs of society was obvious, and it was impossible to combat directly a Left-wing majority which remained exigent and easily offended. Nothing could be done beyond attempting partial adjustments and trusting to the instincts of self-preservation to withstand the forces of dissolution.

President Fallières was subtle enough to see that this was not a situation for a brilliant Premier. He summoned a featureless man, Sarrien, who was to govern with a team so mixed that the *Bloc* could not recognise itself in that ministry. Raymond Poincaré entered it as Finance Minister, a man already marked out to take control of a collapsing machine. On the other hand, Fallières raised the ban laid by Loubet on Clemenceau, who became Minister of the Interior. This was a bold appointment, and the most calculating observer would not have foreseen its ultimate results. With Clemenceau the spirit of contradiction achieved power just when his long-desired 'maximum Republic' was attained, and was even beginning to outstrip the former desires of the most advanced Radicals.

Clemenceau in office presented the spectacle of a man at war with himself. Did he not personify that Republic which, sprung from the Revolution, had to discipline itself to live? He was charged with inconsistency because he battled against his impulses which drove him towards anarchy. His swift changes of front mirrored those

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

which the regime itself were continually executing so as to keep a steady keel. The 'maximum Republic' had to be compensated by the minimum of order. And this requirement was expressed by Clemenceau's capricious line of movement.

He presided over the elections of 1906, which gave the Radicals such a majority that they could dispense with Socialist support. At the head of the ministry after Sarrien's resignation, Clemenceau made the original experiment of a Government in which he was everything, surrounding himself only with personal devotees, even giving the War Ministry to Colonel Picquart, in remembrance of the Dreyfus affair. He also established the Ministry of Labour called for by Louis Blanc in 1848—but ordered the arrest of the secretaries of the Confederation of Trade Unions who had announced a May Day demonstration. He repressed strikes with the help of armed force. He restored discipline among the civil servants, upholding against them the principle of the sovereign State.

More by instinct than by method, he shaped an authoritarian Government, with a Jacobin manner and reasonably national in tone, rebuffing pacifism and anything that smacked of Utopias, lending even to anti-clericalism the Gallican flavour of a struggle against a foreign Power. The law of Separation was put into force without public worship being interrupted, although it was sometimes hampered, whilst an official search was made in the former premises of the Nuncio and revealed papers which were supposed to show the existence of a 'Roman' plot against the Republic. It is impossible to

THE BRAKE ON CATASTROPHE

judge whether Clemenceau believed in these conspiracies as firmly as Waldeck-Rousseau had done, whether he was under the spell of his student reading and his idolisation of the Revolution, or whether he was not merely trying to give the Radicals some harmless satisfaction just when he was bringing them to a rupture with socialism and to a dissolution of the former *Bloc*.

He was now 'on the other side of the barricade.' He protected the material basis of bourgeois society and the prime necessities of national life. Essentially an easy task; nobody except a few doctrinaires wanted to destroy a state of affairs offering so many boons and blessings. In his controversy with Jaurès, to whom he ironically gave four months for providing a plan of the City of the Future, the laugh—and likewise a people of property-owners—was on Clemenceau's side. State dividends punctually paid had made for congenial habit. People were prepared to be Radical-Socialists, that is to say, slightly socialistic without going so far as confiscation and sharing-out. By raising the payment of Deputies from twenty-five francs a day, a figure unaltered since the legendary remark of Baudin, to 1500 francs a year, the Chambers seemed to be offering to all men a reasonable dream, half the income of that 'happy million,' the ideal number of the bourgeoisie, at which Proudhon so long ago had mocked. It was wide of the mark to suppose that Parliament would thus make itself unpopular. The mass of the people, thinking it over, did not feel that they were paying too highly for the particular services rendered by their representatives by a sort of contract reached between electors and elected.

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

The invincible propensity was there. It had not taken long for the Radical Republic to revert to that idea of earthly happiness obtained by the polling-card, which had formerly been the strength of the opportunist Republic. Small property, the buttress of medium-sized and great property, remained sacred, and doles distributed under sundry pretexts attached the rural electors to the State system. If there were fewer humanists than formerly to read their Horace, the words *modus agri non ita magnus* were at the back of most men's minds, and it was agreeable that the head of the State, in his domain of Loupillon, should drink the wine of his own vineyard. The only reproach levelled against him was that he constantly reprieved criminals sentenced to death. Democracy no longer had the fervours of '48. Socialism was advancing in so far as it was without express doctrine and could insinuate itself into laws which seemed not at all to alter ancient custom.

The dreaded convulsions failed to appear. What happened was rather a gradual weakening of the organism. Clemenceau himself was too bluff to fall in with this general slackening of tone. He brought about his downfall by one of his cutting phrases, which, for once, fell wide of the mark, as he accused Delcassé of having 'humiliated France.' It was one of those remarks he made for no other reason than his scorn of human beings, and sometimes they ventured to repay him. But his fall was not a sudden surprise. People were tired of his rule; his bantering, rakish, man-about-town air startled the provinces, and frequently common sense. The transference to the Panthéon of Émile Zola's body, like the

THE BRAKE ON CATASTROPHE

choice of Picquart for the War Ministry, was a kind of bravado. To reduce the periods of training for reservists, after having reduced the period of actual service under the colours, was a form of anti-militarism more serious in effect than these challenges. Nevertheless, Clemenceau had checked the collapse of the State, and his barbed tongue had not spared those who denied the conceptions of patriotism. Imitating those opportunists whom once he had spattered with his sarcasm, he had, in his own turn, slowed up the movement of democracy.

On a different plane, his successor carried on this work. A flattering murmur welcomed Aristide Briand to office. This former revolutionary, who had put the Separation laws into effect with a sort of velvet glove, had neither preconceptions nor plans. It was simply an instinctive movement that made him, in a speech at Périgueux in October 1908, revert to the idea of 'the new spirit,' promising the end of old feuds, and pacification by a timid return to the Conservative Republic and to Spuller. But the outstanding novelty was his expression of sympathy with those who were calling for reformers.

Revision of the Constitution was no longer talked about. Radicalism had settled therein and found the house convenient. The regime itself was no longer in dispute in the Chamber and Senate, just when the hidden flaw was becoming perceptible. It was following the natural downward slope of democracies, following it even more slowly than was thought, but whilst it was really turning towards its true nature, those Republicans

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

who retained a sense of the public weal believed that it was a process of degeneration. The electoral mandate was becoming a profession, as Raymond Poincaré said as he watched the parliamentary body falling into the hands of 'politicians by trade.' Far from blaming the electoral system as such, well-intentioned theorists planned to organise it so as to correct abuses. The system of constituency voting, by diminishing the political area, seemed to be the cause of the evil. The image of the 'stagnant pools,' employed by Briand, evoked memories of 'the rotten boroughs' of the old electoral system in England. Electoral reform, based on the *scrutin de liste* (the party ticket system) and on proportional representation, came into favour and roused high hopes. It united those who sincerely desired the betterment of the Republic, not believing that improvement was an impossibility. They had beside them the Socialists, who hoped to augment the number of their Deputies by a polling system favourable to minorities. And the campaign thus jointly waged throughout France was not in vain: it met with a response from a subtle head of the Government, a man who was said to be endowed with antennæ.

The result of the 1910 elections showed signs of this current of thought. With little change in the numerical strength of the parties, the Chamber was rejuvenated by the arrival of two hundred new Deputies. Movement was no longer so closely restricted to the framework of the Radical party. The 'constituency men,' the professionals denounced by Raymond Poincaré, were powerful enough to avert the electoral reforms, thanks to the now Radical Senate, anxious to safeguard radical-

THE BRAKE ON CATASTROPHE

ism. But this body—a more important point—was able to force a breathing-space, to return to a certain moderation, and to undertake measures of national interest, in the absence of which a foreign danger would have found the Republic totally unprepared.

The threat of war grew steadily greater. Since 1905 not a year had passed without a scare. To placate Germany, France had agreed to submit the Moroccan question to an international conference. Before the delegates of thirteen States assembled at Algeciras the German case was rejected; only Austria voted with the Germans in the minority. Thenceforward William II vowed not to submit to a tribunal of the Powers any matter affecting the interests of his Empire. In 1908 a trifling incident at Casablanca, when the German consul had sheltered deserters from the Foreign Legion, almost brought a clash. Clemenceau stood firm, and this time the storm blew over. But in one form or another the peril would revive. A sense of security was derived through the network of alliances and friendships woven by Delcassé and his diplomatic colleagues. Or else, men were ready to believe with Jaurès that war was impossible, as the German Socialists would unite to prevent it.

According to his confidants, Aristide Briand was then professing the esoteric doctrine that the dangerous plight of France had a good side. Fear of Germany compelled the Republic to moderate courses, and kept it from a rush into anarchy. Further, as reason and patriotism do not make their force felt unaided, they should be

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

helped by governmental action. A railway strike which broke out in October 1910 was regarded as an open attack on national defence, and to break it the President of the Council took energetic measures by calling the railway staffs to the colours. Informing the Chamber of his success, Briand was so bold, or so rash, as to declare that, for the public safety, it was the Government's duty to make up the deficiencies of the law. This justification of illegality made him be regarded as a dictator by the extreme Left, and he did not maintain his majority for long. Even for that Chamber his words had been too strong.

There was a return to Radical ministries, which socialism kept well under its thumb. Under a certain Monis, an obscure and powerless man, the Government reverted to weakness in the face of disorder. An aeroplane accident in which the War Minister, Berteaux, lost his life cut short this period of relapse. Joseph Caillaux followed on. Having entered the Radical-Socialist party, he nevertheless intended to uphold the Jacobin tradition of the authoritarian State, whilst abroad he planned to resume the experiment of Rouvier.

Thiers had long ago believed that a vanquished France could do nothing but reach an understanding with Germany. The idea tempted Gambetta, Ferry, and others too, although nobody frankly admitted it. The ordeal of 1905 had not discouraged Joseph Caillaux, who believed that Rouvier had stopped midway, and that the war-clouds could be dispersed if only France desired peace. His system tended generally to upset the alliances. The opportunity for applying it duly arrived.

THE BRAKE ON CATASTROPHE

In July 1911 Germany despatched a gunboat to Agadir, in order to show that she maintained her claim to rights in Morocco. It was a repetition of the Tangier incident, a provocation or a cast of the lead, perhaps even a summons to France to break with England. Nevertheless, the German Government allowed an opening for an arrangement. Dropping her dispute as to the French protectorate in Morocco, Germany asked for colonial compensation, suggesting the surrender to her of a part of the French Congo. A refusal might bring war. Although Britain resented a partition of territory carried out in Africa without her consent, Caillaux agreed to negotiate. The discussions were ably carried on by the ambassador in Berlin, Jules Cambon, and ended with a small concession, regarded by the German Nationalists as ludicrous. 'France is only giving us ten milliards of tsetse flies,' exclaimed one of their leaders. Germany would not have been satisfied with a larger share of the Congo. She needed much more. But she retained the sense of a deal which had gone wrong, not of one properly settled. Instinctively the French public felt this.

In itself, however, the transaction was not shameful. With any other people but the Germans, it would have been reasonable. Had not France, in 1904, surrendered her rights in Egypt and Newfoundland to Britain? The Congo, in spite of the illustrious name of Savorgnan de Brazza, was doubtless of less account than the land of the Pharaohs where Bonaparte had left the imprint of France. Very few Frenchmen even knew where to find the places in question on the atlas. But an abandonment

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

of territory, whatever it was, revived the idea of the lost provinces, and caused fears of other demands. Whereupon the baleful quality of unpopularity fastened upon Joseph Caillaux as formerly upon Jules Ferry. The latter had been overturned by Clemenceau on account of a colonial policy which, though gaining domains in Asia, seemed to compromise France's greater interests in Europe. Clemenceau overturned Caillaux, who had given away pieces of another domain, in Africa, and, more particularly, was involving France in a system of concessions with regard to Germany. Questions put by Clemenceau in the Senate led to the Foreign Minister, Selves, disclosing that the President of the Council had engaged in secret negotiations with the German Government; and in consequence of this statement, he resigned. The fall of Joseph Caillaux followed at once.

His successor was designated by Clemenceau, still at odds with himself. If there was one man for whom he had no liking, apart from Caillaux, it was Raymond Poincaré. But he named Poincaré as the one man who ought to take power, and President Fallières followed this pointer. Already the name of Poincaré held qualities which no other could provide.

The sign of the dæmon was again manifesting itself. In other times it would have been said that the Genius of the Republic always intervened in time to bring forward the man capable of redressing the shaken balance. The Greeks would have wondered if this choice were not divinely inspired. It certainly came from an exact sense of the opportune. "The political personnel," writes

THE BRAKE ON CATASTROPHE

Seignobos, 'judged it necessary to convey the impression abroad of France being united in a firm and respected Government.' The same writer, not without a touch of blame, observes that the new Premier spoke no more about 'secular defence,' nor about the 'fiscal, social, and democratic reforms' which had been demanded a few months earlier by the Radical party congress. He only proposed 'not to leave France exposed to other countries.' In other words, the instinct of self-preservation was prompting the cessation of dangerous experiments, of demoralisation and decline, and was urging the preparation of the country to resist hostile forces from without.

The events of 1912 compelled this rectification. The European cauldron began to seethe, and strange new things were seen. The Balkan War, the unexpected defeat of Turkey, the victory of the Slav races, were all undermining the position of Austria and alarming Germany. As so often in the past, the affairs of the Near East and those of Central Europe cast up waves which reached even France. If France had not then had a 'firm and respected Government,' if she had not halted her disintegration, it may be wondered whether the approaching dangers would not have been still greater. The pause was marked. Prolonged debates on electoral reform, voted by the Chamber and rejected by the Senate, distracted attention from other reforms which could only debilitate the finances still more. In the meantime, Poincaré, in charge of Foreign Affairs, supervised the course of events, intervening aptly to secure what diplomats term 'a localisation of the conflict.' At

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

all events, it was postponed. The initiatives taken by the French Government, their efforts of mediation in harmony with Britain and Russia, had averted a general war. It was not within its power to abolish the causes which, two years later, decided Germany to attack her neighbours. Time had been gained, and that meant much. The breathing-spell had been usefully employed.

Early in 1913 Armand Fallières completed his seven-years' term. Under an obtuse exterior he had subtlety and a deep-seated moderation. His extreme fear of responsibility was not always a bad counsellor. Handling his scales with caution, he had come as far as this Poincaré ministry, a far cry indeed from the days of Waldeck-Rousseau and Combes. It would be too much to say that this easy-going Presidency had been curative. But it probably extracted all the good possible from a Chamber which, succeeding that of the Left *Bloc*, was likewise the least harmful that could be obtained.

Nor could it be claimed that this Presidency had erred through excess of brilliance. To restore a tone, a clear accent, to France was a crying need. Fallières, in making Poincaré head of the ministry, had not been indifferent to the expression of opinion in the press and amongst the public, which had penetrated the walls of the Élysée as well as of Chamber and Senate. Vigilance and firmness in the conduct of Foreign Affairs was still called for. People kept saying that a Lorrainer, a man of the frontier—as Poincaré was—possessed a keener sense of danger than others. And Raymond Poincaré in power responded to expectations. For this reason a current began to form which would make him the successor of

THE BRAKE ON CATASTROPHE

Fallières; and it was a current from without. For that very reason it was opposed in the Chambers by those who were suspicious of first-rate candidatures, and who feared a dictator in any popular President. Going back on the investiture which he had so recently conferred on Poincaré, Clemenceau set up a rival candidate against him. This time the king-maker was not listened to, and a President was elected not by the decision of parliamentary groups, but by the demands of newspapers and of public esteem.

Scrupulously respectful of the Constitution and of accepted practice, Raymond Poincaré was the last man to be tempted to abuse his function. He did not even seek to revive the rights which had been lost to the Presidential office. He regarded them as invalid by prescription. But he acted by means of influence, persuasion, advice. One thing had to be speedily done, and the state of opinion and temper of the Chambers made it possible. Both public and private information went to show that Germany was preparing for war. It was a prime necessity to put France in a fit state to resist invasion and to withstand the numerical superiority of the enemy. In 1905 it had been said that the law for the two years' military service would build up 'an armed nation' by the numbers and value of the reserve forces. The principle had soon weakened, and the periods of reservists' training had been shortened. It was only the return to the three-years law which would enable the frontier to be fully covered. Aristide Briand, summoned to carry on a ministry, was defeated on the electoral

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

reform issue, which the Senate stubbornly opposed, before the essential of the military system of 1889 was re-established. Louis Barthou took his place, and undertook the reinforcement of the army. Not without opposition he secured parliamentary sanction, during July 1913. It was high time.

Barthou had entered politics on the morrow of Panama. Like Raymond Poincaré, he had been one of the younger men who then rejuvenated a discredited personnel. From the ranks of the moderates, a minister under Méline and under Clemenceau, he was a sort of independent who kept clear of party ties, as Briand did after leaving socialism behind him. The election of Poincaré, and the cult of proportional representation, had already shown a tendency towards breaking away from the set frameworks. The Radical party felt menaced by this freedom of action on the part of a group in the political world. It could always repair an electoral defeat provided that the discipline of the Left remained paramount. But discipline was crumbling. Nowadays it needed more than the pledging of safeguards for secularism to be a true Republican, and to emancipate oneself was perhaps a greater crime than to turn moderate. For this reason, battle was engaged between men, more bitter than between the clans and groups.

Having exhausted his credit by obtaining the passage of the three-years law, Louis Barthou was defeated apparently on a fiscal question: actually on a very different issue. Radicalism was in a hurry to return to power before the elections, and imposed on Poincaré, as a sort of sentinel, one of its confidential agents, a delegate

THE BRAKE ON CATASTROPHE

of the unsullied Left named Gaston Doumergue. He seemed to be setting up a guardianship over the President elected against the wishes of the *Bloc*, and eagerly chose as collaborators Joseph Caillaux and René Renoult. Peaceable citizens groaned. Paris scoffed at this militant with the crude provincial accent, who rebuffed with horror the voices of the Right. It was not to be long before the metamorphosis was seen.

The men threatened with outlawry by the heads of the Radical party now took up a stand. Briand and Barthou had no intention of being banned from the Republic, as Millerand and even Doumergue were in due time to be. The weak point in the Radicals' position was the unpopularity of Joseph Caillaux. In debate they attacked, and in the press they inspired attacks on the man denounced by Briand as 'the plutocrat demagogue.' A drama developed. On the evening of 16th March 1914 Paris learned that the wife of the Finance Minister, Madame Caillaux, to avenge her husband and stop the publication of compromising letters, had shot dead the editor of *Le Figaro*, Gaston Calmette.

The spilling of blood seemed like an omen, rather as had been the murder of Victor Noir by Pierre Bonaparte, a few months before the war of 1870. And then, as now, indignation did not press beyond the bounds of Paris. On 10th January 1870 a prince of the reigning family killed a journalist with his pistol, and on 8th May the plebiscite had once again recorded over seven million approving votes for the Empire. Similarly, the murder of Calmette did not weigh in the electoral balance. The elections of May 1914 brought a triumph for advanced

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

radicalism no less marked than the vote of May 1870 had been for the Empire.

The Left *Bloc* had re-formed, and went to the polls with the password of a virtue tried and tested for forty years—peace. The credulous elector was assured that war was impossible, that the comrades of the German social-democratic party would prevent it, since they had pledged opposition to it. Also, it was urged, French armaments were a madness which must provoke William II and could only enrich the gun manufacturers, whilst the three-years military law was a futile sacrifice demanded from the people. On this programme over one hundred Socialists were elected. The programme of the Radicals, who returned *en masse*, was not very different. Never yet had the Republic gone so far in demagoguery.

This Chamber did not have time to show its capabilities. The war forbade that. And doubtless, if Germany had attacked France two or three years later, the national defences would have been seriously weakened. Poincaré, at pains to preserve them and to safeguard the military structure built up again by the last Chamber, tried by choosing Ribot for the ministry to form a Government of no political colour, to concern itself with the main interests of France. Ribot was defeated on the day of his appearance, and the Chamber jeered at his allusions to the peril without the gates. The President had to find a man acceptable to the Left, yet open-minded enough to appreciate the reality of the danger. At last he found an Independent Socialist, Viviani, who, after reading the confidential reports of French agents abroad, realised that war was at hand. If only diplo-

THE BRAKE ON CATASTROPHE

matic despatches could be communicated to six hundred Deputies and ten million voters!

In fine, and surveying the succession of events since Waldeck-Rousseau and Combes, it is seen that at the supreme moment it had still proved possible to restrain democracy. Since 1902 it had not been sliding downhill without interruption. The alliances built by Delcassé still stood. The army was not destroyed, nor the State dissolved. The moral forces themselves were not disintegrated. There still remained enough men of the generation which had known defeat and grown up in the memory of 1870. In power or in opposition, their voices upheld the essentials and checked the worst surrenders. In these years of deliquescence there had even been a revival of national feeling. Criticism of the regime, from intellectuals, from writers, from the choice and independent minds of the time, had been beneficial to the Republic, which, left to itself with its electoral supremacy, was in danger of perishing from its own excesses. And in the end a few Republicans—in some cases the most unexpected—had still been found to slow down the advancing evil.

It could not be said that the respite gained on the eve of the catastrophe had in all ways been used as advantageously as it might have been. The brake had held. It had not been useless. It would enable the Republic to face that ordeal which, from the first, its partisans and adversaries had both dreaded.

CHAPTER XII

THE TEST OF WAR

THE Socialist party at this time included one man who had wit, an unruly devil who caught the Republic in a dilemma. This regime, argued Marcel Sembat, was incapable of sustaining a war: it had not been fashioned for that purpose. So it must avoid war at all costs, or else give way to other institutions. The content of Sembat's book was in its title: *Make a King, or else—Peace.*

Indeed, many Republicans who did not practise irony in their dialectic felt deep anxiety: or at least some doubts. Weighing the qualities and shortcomings of the Constitution of 1875, Gabriel Hanotaux, the historian of the early years of the Republic, had written: 'Possibly it would not adapt itself easily to a crisis in which the fate of the country was at stake. It does not make provision for dangers from without.' He even asked: 'What would happen, in peace or in war, if all the springs of the nation had suddenly to be made taut in a supreme effort to cover the frontier and save the country's soul?' And the answer remained in suspense.

The enemy were in no doubt. They did not believe that a democracy was capable of imposing military discipline on itself, and envisaged revolution in France as soon as a general mobilisation was ordered. On 31st July 1914 the irreparable was brought to pass. Germany

THE TEST OF WAR

cast the 'iron dice.' That same night a young man killed Jean Jaurès in a restaurant. Instantly the German agencies spread the rumour that Paris was in flames and blood, that the Red Flag was hoisted over the Élysée.

It was illusion. That hour held many dangers, but the gravest was of a kind which could not be guessed at. The constant fear of the Republicans had been that defeat in war would mean the overthrow of the regime, and victory, the dictatorship of a general. Nobody had imagined a war that had to last for over four years before reaching any result. The improbability of such a hypothesis would have seemed obvious, especially if it had been added that this lengthy ordeal would be supported without a mortal collapse from within.

The start of the troops for the frontier was made in good order and with a high fervour of patriotism; but the circumstances left no other choice. Although the question of responsibility has been subsequently obscured by attempts to distribute it, it was perfectly plain on 2nd August 1914, the day of mobilisation. Germany was forcing the war. It had to be accepted. Against whom, against what, could there have been a revolt? The secret papers of the Government included a certain list (*Carnet B*), which contained the names of dangerous syndicalists whose arrest was anticipated in the event of war. It was not necessary to use this. As for the Chamber, the majority in which was elected in protest against the three-years law and the 'madness of armaments,' that body also could only accept the inevitable and show zeal in providing the fighting forces with the arms which they lacked.

This was not the hour for demanding accounts, and

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

democracy could demand them only from itself. In the clash everything received its hurt or its reward. An army, leaders, alliances had been kept: and for that reason the first shock did not bring the dreaded annihilation. The effect of destruction or neglect was to open the frontier to invasion. The victory of the Marne saved the country from an imminent loss. But after that victory, there was a lack of the necessary means for expelling the enemy from French soil, and if those means had been in existence, the country would perhaps never have been invaded. All in all, the good was repaid, the bad was expiated.

At the start of hostilities one thing was certain. The political cleavages were becoming fatal. In the common danger they obliterated themselves, and the parties joined hands in the 'sacred union'—precarious though the union might be. The odds were against the long continuance of that fervent goodwill of the early days. That would have been too much to expect of mortals. But, in Charles Maurras's precisely turned phrase, the '*mon-archy* of war' compelled discipline. The presence of the enemy on national soil allowed no relapse into vicious habits. The remaining fear was lest a democracy might succumb to the weariness of a struggle too painful and too prolonged, although various circumstances might unite to save it from itself. From the first the Government of the Republic had given its word to its allies not to sign a separate peace, and it was highly probable that Britain would pursue the war she had entered to the ultimate result. The joining of British

THE TEST OF WAR

with French troops in France was a preventive of any weakness on either side, and the cause of Belgium made the link unbreakable. Finally, and perhaps outstanding, there could not be any elections before the end of hostilities, or even before demobilisation. A simple clause of the organic laws, withholding the vote from all serving soldiers, suppressed the risk of popular consultation. The exercise of democracy was suspended, and the freedom of the press likewise by the institution of a censorship. The regime was protected against its own frailty.

But it was on the Government and the men composing it that the propelling force of the war depended, and the will might flinch. The war persisted, with immeasurable sacrifices, far beyond what seemed endurable. No end to it could be seen. The miracle was not only the miracle of the Marne, but rather it might have been that energy did not slacken, that old ideas and habits did not gain the mastery. The political personnel had not changed, none could have been conceived less fitted for waging a great war. Ministers were themselves out on the task one after the other; and what wore out with them was that spirit of patriotism, at first genuine, but more spurious as victory seemed to recede. Viviani was followed by Briand, Briand by Ribot. Months went by, doubts arose about the outcome of the struggle, morale was affected, a general softening began. Signs of discouragement appeared, the only surprise being that they had not appeared sooner. The secret committees of the Chamber, whose proceedings were too often divulged, let themselves drift towards pessimism. Thus dawned 'the troublous year' of 1917.

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

That was a time when nearly everything threatened to go wrong. In March the Russian Revolution produced a demoralising effect. Whatever the efforts made to prove that it must surely revive war-like energies, in the manner of the French Revolution, men felt that the alliance was over and that the great auxiliary of the East was about to add one crowning disappointment to its earlier record. On the other hand, Germany was making tentative peace overtures in all directions. She made use of her Socialists to entice those of other countries, who were invited to Stockholm to examine methods for ending the war. At the same time diplomatic webs were being spun through the neutral countries, by the hands of all kinds of go-betweens. Aristide Briand, anxious to return to power and preside over the peace-making, allowed himself to be drawn into one of these with the German Lancken. Ribot, then President of the Council, showed embarrassment and hesitation, and, with some show of indignation, let things go on. 'One has to live with the Chamber,' he said. This necessity, as there was one, increased the Government's debility. The spring was losing its tautness. The dreaded situation was on the point of developing.

Very quickly it became serious. There were open demands for peace. The soldiers, worn out with effort and suffering, and worked upon by Socialist propaganda, began to listen to agitators. Mutinies broke out at the front, and stern examples had to be made in order to stop the rot. For a moment a total collapse was imminent, while at home confusion was growing worse. A peace party was covertly taking shape amongst the men

THE TEST OF WAR

whose forecasts had been belied by facts, whether they had declared war to be impossible, or had advised consistent yielding to Germany. The ideas of Joseph Caillaux returned to favour. They found newspapers to further them, and these newspapers found backers and subsidies. In this way came the explosion of the *Bonnet Rouge* affair, which revealed much complicity and collusion. Meanwhile cases of treason, espionage, incitement to mutiny were plentiful, but they were not repressed, or the repression was half-hearted. One-third of the Chamber, it was said, wanted an immediate peace. Amongst the politicians there were plenty who closed their eyes to the activities of those who, seditious to-day, might be in control to-morrow. For months on end it seemed as if the historian had been right in asking whether the Constitution could adapt itself 'to a crisis in which the fate of the country was at stake.'

From his post of duty Raymond Poincaré watched with alarm this progressive disintegration. The rules of the parliamentary game, which had resumed sway over the needs of public safety, obliged him to provide a successor to Ribot even more weakly than Ribot. Paul Painlevé, torn by doubts and uncertainties, a man of impulse and open to every influence, had fewer happy inspirations than unhappy ones. In his hands the conduct of this war tended to resemble that in 1870 under the improvisations of the Government of National Defence. The tragedy and confusion became almost ridiculous when he feigned belief in the existence of the so-called 'panoplies plot' on the part of the Royalists. Confusion was worse confounded.

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

Not for a moment had Raymond Poincaré thought of stepping beyond his constitutional duties, or of using the circumstances and prestige which had set him in the Elysée, to form a special emergency Government. His problem was to find by regular and parliamentary means the man capable of restoring order and straightening out the tangle. Public opinion pointed to one. But how many objections could be seen against him! How many reasons for distrust he had given! How hazardous it seemed to summon Clemenceau!

Probably nobody in the 'sacred union' had given proof of graver indiscipline. His patriotism had not even mastered his libertarian prejudices against the generals. He had claimed the right to speak his whole mind, to spare nothing, sneering at men and damning their actions, preaching war to the last ditch and declaiming that all was lost; calling on the soldiers to defend France and laughing scornfully at their leaders. When the censorship struck at his newspaper, the *Free Man*, he brought it out again under the title of the *Man in Fetters*. Once, from an exalted quarter, he had received the nickname of Thersites, in allusion to the sour-tongued grumbler who troubled the army of the Greeks investing Troy.

Clemenceau, however, a seething confusion of elements, was the only man with enough character to revive the flagging energy, enough authority to force the Chamber back to its duty, enough vigour to draw the bow once more. The hour required a man untrammelled, and here he was. Raymond Poincaré realised this. He had generosity enough to forget the insults flung at him.

THE TEST OF WAR

His summons to Clemenceau showed that the Genius of the Republic was still standing guard. The man, no doubt, had shortcomings of spirit which made him dangerous, and the experiment was risky. But no other could be tried. If it were not done, the regime would have to admit that Marcel Sembat was right, and confess its inability to carry on the war and save France.

As in 1871, when Thiers reappeared, it was to an old man that the country entrusted her fate, and in whom the French people placed their faith, as if advanced age and nearness to the grave offered a warranty of selflessness and devotion to the public weal which could not be found elsewhere. But Clemenceau was called to take over power only because demoralisation had not yet affected the topmost peak of the State and a flame still burned clear in the Elysée. Now, Raymond Poincaré was President because, at the election of 1913, he enjoyed great prestige gained by work accomplished in the Government whose door had been opened to him by Clemenceau after Agadir. One man, then, had preferred Poincaré to Caillaux; and now, the other preferred Clemenceau to Caillaux. Everything was leading back to simple elements.

Simple also was Clemenceau's motto, which raised him at one touch to a kind of sublimity. His programme was contained, or very nearly so, in four words: '*I am making war.*' And he made war.

If discipline had not been restored, intrigue banned, and treason stamped upon, in the year 1918, when the Germans were launching their last attacks, defeat and downfall would probably have ensued. It was a moment

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

when resolves demanding ruthless energy had to be made, resolves that left no place for plotting or vain criticism or recalcitrance in the rear. But Clemenceau had already alarmed and scattered the disturbing and maleficent elements by opening the prosecution of Joseph Caillaux and Jean Louis Malvy, who were condemned by the High Court to penalties more moral than afflicting, the second offender, in particular, for having betrayed his trust as Minister of the Interior. It was an attenuated recollection, an almost symbolic version, of the Terror. The Clemenceau who had so long been an admirer of the Convention was seen in his present activity, for he remembered from the Committee of Public Safety that a firm authority and emergency measures at home were essential for victory.

On 11th November 1918 victory was at last attained. At what cost and through what sacrifice, it is needless to say. But of all the events which had been seen, and which, had any prophet been able to foretell them, would have seemed incredible, the most astonishing fact, and doubtless the least conceivable, was that after all these vast upheavals the regime survived completely unaltered, without one jot or tittle of change in the Constitution. And yet how often had it been said that the general who regained Alsace and Lorraine would be the master of France! ~

Even the figures on the political stage were hardly at all rejuvenated. The parties were back in their ordinary formations. There was only one new detail: proportional representation was admitted in a desire for a certain amount of change, and in the elections a year after the

THE TEST OF WAR

armistice this aided the success of a Nationalist majority. In fact, for fifty years past, it had always needed the displacement of a few hundreds of thousands of voters to modify the character of the elected assemblies. Many of those elected in 1914 were defeated: their words about the 'madness of armaments' were not forgotten. But this national Chamber born in the aftermath of battles, and called the 'horizon-blue' Chamber in token of its large ex-service element, had good intentions but few ideas. So timid was it that, when Poincaré's term of office expired, it shrank from raising Clemenceau to the Presidency. Some made him pay for the disappointments of peace-time, others were unrelenting towards his inveterate anti-clericalism. Others, again, were apprehensive of his 'terrible deficiencies,' and of that 'overweening pride' which he had shown throughout a romantic career. Defeated by Paul Deschanel, Clemenceau took shelter until death reached him in a lofty disdain. Thus, after a brief apotheosis, ended the amazing trajectory, described through half a century, of the man who had so long demanded the 'maximum Republic' only to end sickened with democracy.

What might Clemenceau's Presidency have produced? It would have been an experiment, and the Republic left it untried, afraid of a spirit so original and so authoritarian. It repudiated him after using him in an emergency, as it had done also to Gambetta. It was afraid of an 'individual,' afraid of hazard. Instinct led it always into the midway course, as if it could survive only by avoiding any divergence.

CHAPTER XIII

THE INSTINCT OF SELF- PRESERVATION

EVERYTHING seemed as it had seemed before; and yet the shape of the old world was gone. The Republic was in the same plight as men themselves were. To endure, it must adapt itself to the new conditions of life which were gradually coming into view, and which allowed only a small margin of error.

Days of trial were approaching, but men believed that a Golden Age was about to dawn. Alsace and Lorraine had been restored, something never promised, and no longer even hoped for, by the Republic. True, there was a great burden of debts, but the Treaty of Versailles had charged them under the head of 'reparations' to the punished aggressor. Above all, the coming period seemed to promise a vast sense of relief. Germany was beaten, her militarism uprooted, her Emperor expelled. She would no longer be formidable for years to come, and perhaps never again. France was no longer a nation threatened by 'a dagger six inches from her heart,' and although foreign policy had still plenty of unsolved problems, none of these held immediate perils. Really, only the future was in consideration, which favoured a return to lessened effort, and the electoral virtues of the

THE INSTINCT OF SELF-PRESERVATION

word 'Peace' were sufficiently tested and certain for the Left groups to have recourse to it in order to regain power.

To accuse a political adversary of desiring war, however absurd the charge, is a sure way of damaging him. This was realised by Aristide Briand. The rash negotiations which he had carried on in 1917 seemed to leave him with a bad conscience, and led him on, as in self-justification, to seek new openings for a *rapprochement* with Germany. A year after the fall of Clemenceau he was once more Foreign Minister, as the elected members of the National *Bloc*, most of them belonging to Conservative elements long excluded from public life, seemed to be intimidated by their sudden return into the light, and left the chief posts in the hands of the older personnel. In 1922, at the Cannes Conference, influenced by suggestions of Lloyd George which harmonised with his own inclinations, Briand played fast and loose with the rights of France as laid down in the Treaty of Versailles. He was condemned by the Chamber, recalled by telegram, disowned and humiliated; his bitterness drove him into the other camp, where he assumed the role of a misunderstood man harried by the view of peace. His name became a rallying-cry for the Left.

Raymond Poincaré, summoned to replace him and restore the firmness of French policy, determined to occupy the Ruhr as a pledge against the unpaid reparations owed by Germany. The operation was carried out without firing a shot, and doubtless marked the apogee of French power. At this time Germany seemed doomed to chaos and ruin, as if she must be in the

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

depths whenever France was at the peak. Before long, however, the fortunes of both countries were to assume a new appearance.

The elections were approaching in France. The National *Bloc*, apart from being held in by the Radical-Socialist Senate, had done nothing with the majority in the Chamber, except reflect an image of the Conservative Republic true to that bequeathed by the Assembly of 1871. Like that gentle and worthy body which had pledged France to the Sacred Heart, the 'horizon-blue' Chamber, nearly half of which consisted of practising Catholics, had made no attempt at all to protect itself against the risk of adverse polls. Only the President of the Republic, elected after Deschanel was forced to resign on grounds of ill health, had tried to take action. His name was Alexandre Millerand. Experience and patriotism had profoundly changed him. The Socialist who had been the terror of the propertied classes twenty years before had become Conservative, and in no passive way. Resuscitating the rights which he found in the Constitution, he was not afraid to take sides with the party to whose majority he owed his post.

It was like MacMahon, forty-eight years before, who threw his name into the scales on the side of 'moral order.' History was repeating itself in a new setting. The old Republican Union had become the Cartel, which mustered Radicals, Socialists, and Revolutionaries, following the old password, 'no enemies on the Left,' which had already prevailed on the occasion of the Sixteenth of May, as also under Waldeck-Rousseau. The weapon was the same one again, an accusation of

THE INSTINCT OF SELF-PRESERVATION

war-mongering flung at the National *Bloc*, as formerly against the Catholic and Monarchist Right, and then against the Moderates. Poincaré was denounced as the instigator of new wars, and peace—which they had not preserved in 1914—was flourished as the banner of the Left. The same result followed. In May 1924 the majority was overturned, proportional representation having this time worked in favour of the more advanced groups and swollen the current.

Five years' exclusion from power left the victorious Cartel eager for reprisals, and they began by avenging Millerand's support of the Right. The President could not even count on the Senate as MacMahon could after his reverse. Isolated against the Chamber, where the Radical-Socialists refused to respond to his appeal and contrived a ministerial strike, he was forced to yield to the demands of the extreme Left, and to resign. The Law of the septennate was violated. The institution of the Presidency received an apparently irremediable wound, whilst the violence and relentlessness of the Socialists led to an almost revolutionary situation.

The worst might have been feared if, despite this severe blow, the Constitution had not stood fast. Millerand's successor had to be provided, and the Cartel put forward Paul Painlevé. Against him stood Gaston Doumergue, formerly the representative of the most suspect Left, which had set him to stand sentinel over Raymond Poincaré in 1913. By what tokens was it recognised that he had now become the fitting choice in the most general interest? What discreet guarantees

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

did he give of his moderation? He was a Protestant, but obtained the Catholic votes, and did not disappoint the hopes placed in him. The Presidency had survived all the shocks, and had not, after all, ceased to fulfil its beneficent role, since its holders, by a sort of unwritten law, had always been moderates.

The new majority found it easy to keep its chief promise, and evacuate the Ruhr on the pretext of reconciling France and Germany. The outcome of this was to be painful, but it did not emerge until later. It took seven or eight years before men saw that they had helped Germany only too well in her recovery. In another sphere, requital was to come on swifter feet.

During the pre-War years the state of the national finances had been causing concern; they had become disordered and a deficit had made itself felt; but the embarrassments of the Treasury had never been grave, nor had disaster ever threatened. Bad management could continue for years without doing vital harm. But everything had changed with the advent of an evil unknown for over a century, forced currency, inflation, the *assignat*, the monster engendered by the militant Revolution and again appearing as a legacy of war, a scourge which at first was invisible and only awaited an opportunity to spread like a plague.

A hundred and twenty-five years of trust in the steadiness of the franc, equivalent to men's confidence in the rising of the sun, had long masked the deterioration of the currency. Gradually the evil had become perceptible, and its causes were beginning to be

THE INSTINCT OF SELF-PRESERVATION

understood. Expenditure had gone on without check. The slightest imprudence might now be fatal. The Cartel was a threat to money, and money took fright. Socialism alarmed savings, and savings fled. It took a great deal to shake the faith of Frenchmen in the signature of the Bank of France, but in two years this religion of a century had vanished. In July 1926 came the extraordinary spectacle of a Finance Minister revealing in the Chamber that the Public Treasury could no longer meet the expenses of the following day, and that the only course was the artifice of a new manufacture of paper money. On that day the old-time franc was worth only a tenth of its face value, and threatened to drop still further. Panic was universal.

Revolt was at hand. Everything was passing, with dividends, savings, provision for old age, everything that the country of thrift and property had believed to be indestructible, believed even to the point that toying with socialism had not seemed dangerous. Now, with the gulf yawning, minds were changed and the Cartel dissolved. As on bad days, whilst breathless ministers spoke their fears, an angry crowd began to gather in front of the Chamber. The first rumblings were heard.

What was needed for everything to break down, the regime itself to be imperilled? That the ministry should be obstinate, that the majority should refuse to yield. A point had been reached when no man from its ranks could now restore the shattered confidence. The Cartel must instantly efface itself. Otherwise the Republic ran the risk of meeting the fate of monarchs

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

who had had to abdicate because they had not been prompt enough to dismiss unpopular ministers.

Silently Gaston Doumergue surveyed the advance of the evil, awaiting the moment to intervene. The hour had come for him to fulfil his tutelary role. There was one man designated by the public voice as the only one capable of restoring confidence and holding back the currency from the brink of the abyss. Again, Raymond Poincaré. Bitter though the pill was to the Radical party, they not only abandoned power to him, but asked him to take it. Edouard Herriot duly effaced himself, in agreement with the Presidency, and with that tradition which induced the regime to save itself by never giving discontent a foothold. Again the Republic showed that plastic suppleness which, 'by repressing democracy,' had so often enabled it to round the stormy cape.

Certainly, catastrophe had been only just avoided, and the damage done was great, as the franc was never to rise again to more than two-fifths of its value. But the crude financial disaster into which the regime risked being drawn had been averted. In the interest of the Republic, the most advanced Republicans had sacrificed their pride, their passions, their grudges. The instinct of self-preservation had made its voice plainly heard.

Why, then, had the Republic endured ever since 4th September 1870, when it was proclaimed in tumult, with the secret anxiety of its first heads, who were in a cloud of doubts? Because in none of the crises which it had traversed did it make a major mistake, because in each of these it felt in time where lay the instrument of its

THE INSTINCT OF SELF-PRESERVATION

own salvation, because it had always found hands ready to draw it out of the abyss, even at the eleventh hour, at the supreme moment. *

Nevertheless, after the salvage accomplished by Raymond Poincaré, and the subsequent period of calm, the Government's troubles were bound to reappear, little different and perhaps more serious. The question was, whether the same intelligence, the same foresight, the same good fortune would always be forthcoming.

CHAPTER XIV

THE SLOPING PATH

THUS, with jolt after jolt, the regime in these new and difficult times succeeded in reconciling opposites. Like Jules Simon bowing to Right and to Left, it was still sufficiently Conservative while yet remaining Republican, and even acquiring some socialism.

In 1928 the thrifty electorate, still deeply stirred by its hour of anguish, elected a Chamber of moderate views. According to custom, this meant a halt and a pause. Disintegration went no further, but nothing remedial was done. The Right Centre ruled with the ideas of the Left Centre, on which socialism acted like a magnet, and in the easy drift neither foreign nor internal affairs changed much. The Radicals' programme was applied by moderates, the latter being no less anxious to please the electors, to promise them effortless peace and give them largess from the State's pocket, than the former had been to avoid alarming the sections of the nation attached to their property and settled ways, and to check the effects of ruinous laws and measures.

In 1931 the seven-years' term of Gaston Doumergue was completed. Declining invitations to renew his candidature, he departed with the halo of a man who stood for order and patriotism, who, five years earlier, when the franc was tottering, had intervened to bring

THE SLOPING PATH

about that other miracle, that second victory of the Marne, inscribed in the annals of self-preserving French society by the return from foreign coffers of 60,000,000,000 refugee francs. Like so many Republicans grown wise, Gaston Doumergue could look on his past and say that times had changed and he had changed with them. He entered that body of reserves from which, in hours of crisis, saviours were to be sought.

The question now was to assure his succession, and Aristide Briand had stepped forward. Who could boast of wider popularity than the self-styled 'Pilgrim of Peace'? He said that his presence alone exorcised war, and not only had he made the crowd believe this, but came to believe it himself. Even the moderates retained him in their ministries like a sort of fetish. So it seemed as if he would only have to come forward to be chosen, and yet in the secret ballot the Congress rejected Briand. An old unwritten law, a law of preservation and prudence, had again come into play. Although men sheltered behind the name of Aristide Briand and used it to avert the suspicion of not having a sufficient love of peace, his political work inspired doubts; there were cracks in the structure; and it was opposed by those who discerned that the apostle had been duped by cynical and adroit Germans. His election foreboded a restless Presidency, challenges, tumult, perhaps worse. Paul Doumer was preferred, who, like Carnot, was shortly to fall the victim to an assassin. But it had been stated that the foremost place in the State would not be given to a man whom the advanced parties could boast of having in their hands. And then, Aristide Briand was

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

to die before the renaissance of warrior Germany had revealed the full extent of his fearful errors.

The whole art of ruling seemed to be reduced to an avoidance of extreme causes of discontent, and so well was this line drawn that it hardly wavered when in 1932 the union of the Left parties, including the Communists, was re-formed, and recovered a majority from the National Republicans, who were conveniently accused, according to established practice, of being the 'war party.' The Cartel returned to power, but not all its leaders had forgotten the lesson of 1926 and the money panic. Edouard Herriot, accordingly, was resolved to be circumspect. It was not long before he was outflanked by his own troops and by the young active Radicals, impatient to reach power.

What spurred them on was doubtless the necessity of concealing those scandals and cases of corruption which in the past cropped up from time to time, and were now becoming more and more frequent through the craving for riches and luxury, and the break-up of moral standards. The flaring up of the most startling of these scandals, the efforts made to stifle it, the perturbation and then the anger which seized the public, will remain probably attached to the name of the swindler, Stavisky, an affair more infamous than Panama because the unadulterated roguery of it degraded everything involved. A minister suspected of shielding venal politicians was overturned by the clamour of the streets. His successor, assuming the same task, conceived the headstrong plan of forcibly resisting the demands of decency. That path led to a night of blood.

THE SLOPING PATH

Never up till then had the Republic made a really capital mistake. Never had it obstinately clung to a hated Government. And never, especially, had it found itself in the hands of such unskilful controllers. Charles X lost his throne for holding on too long to Polignac, Louis-Philippe for having dismissed Guizot too late. On 6th February 1934, through the fault of a junta which refused to lay down power, the Republic was imperilled as never before. It provoked insurrection by ordering its guards to fire on the crowd, and from the reddened pavements rose the historic call: 'To arms! Our brothers are being murdered!' For some hours it looked as if, whatever happened, the fate of the regime must be at stake. Next day the infuriated opponents, determined to resume the struggle, would have perhaps been shot down by machine-guns, although everything was in turbulence and more than one regiment was doubtful. But the young Radicals who planned to bring Paris to submission would have conquered only to accomplish a *coup d'état* and set up their dictatorship against legality.

Three days had completed the revolutions of 1830 and 1848. From eleven o'clock in the morning of 7th February, when the counting of the dead and wounded of the night's volleys had hardly been completed, everything was peaceful and order was returning. The regime was fortunate again in its Constitution, in its powers being still virtually distinct, in having the moderating and arbitrating function ready to hand. The Presidency was still of some use. Placing the threat of his own resignation in the scales, the head of the State, Albert Lebrun, thirteenth holder of the 'constitutional

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

monarchy under another name,' forced the Jacobin adventurers to withdraw. But the seat of power was empty, Paris was bodeful, almost an armed camp. It was essential to find instantly a man endowed with sufficient prestige to call a truce; and there were few such. Gaston Doumergue was remembered, approached, and persuaded to emerge from his retirement. His appearance produced the same effect as that of Raymond Poincaré eight years before. In a few hours the crisis was eased; in a few days the financial danger, revived by Governments of essentially socialist character, again receded; and the Chamber, sensible of the grave mistakes made, eclipsed itself for its own salvation.

Gaston Doumergue perforce controlled the situation until the day when he sought to amend the Constitution. Convinced that nothing could be hoped for by remaining in the old groove, seeing that every halt only took things farther downhill, and knowing that any recovery was precarious unless supported by reforms, he proposed certain methods suited, in his view, to restore the authority of Government and the health of the State. In short, he no longer believed that a democracy drawn along towards socialism could any longer be restrained by the ordinary processes used by his predecessors and by himself.

He may have been mistaken as to the virtues of his reforms, but he was still more so as regards the readiness of the politicians to accept them. He had been welcomed as a saviour. He was almost banished for an attempt on the life of the Republic. The Constitution was defended

THE SLOPING PATH

as a sacred text by the heirs of the men who formerly had themselves received it from the hands of the Conservatives, without recognising its truly Republican character.

What lies beyond this point is as yet unknown. The regime still exists, its outward aspect intact. The rhythm of its movement has become less regular: more and more frequently it becomes necessary to suspend the method of majority rule, the party game—that is, the parliamentary system itself—and to fall back on small empiric dictators, in the phrase used by Auguste Comte in an earlier age. And yet the need for remedying abuses is felt everywhere, exactly as it was before 1789. As at that time also, all suggested reforms meet with opposition, and no two groups in the nation agree upon the same ones as desirable. Everybody wants them; nobody accepts any. For there is none which does not affect some vested interest, and no vested interest will consent to self-sacrifice.

In all truth, if difficulties have increased, and if war and its aftermath have helped to magnify them, they have come with the development of democracy, which was first rebuffed, then admitted with restraints, and at last overflowed, and which, justifying the Corneille maxim, 'Of all states the worst is the popular,' can now be kept within bounds only by temporary sedatives. With no pretension to originality, we shall transcribe

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

at the close of this narrative, as many others have done, the enduring lines of Livy's Introduction to his history of the Roman Republic:

'I know that most readers will take scant pleasure in viewing the origins, being impatient to reach these recent times when the forces of a people long their own rulers are destroying themselves. . . . Let each one apply himself assiduously to understanding what were the moral standards, what was life in Rome, and by what men and methods, in peace and in war, this Empire was founded and made great. Let them then follow the imperceptible stages whereby morality declined, in the relaxing of discipline, falling lower day by day, and at last rushing headlong downward towards these present days, when we can suffer neither our own vices nor their cure.'

INDEX

A

- Alexander III, Tsar of Russia, 127, 128
 Amelia, Princess, 98
 André, General, 189, 194, 200
 Andrieux, prefect of police, 77
 Ariège, Madame Arnaud de l', 75
 Aumale, Duc d', (Henri d'Orléans), 39, 64, 98, 99
Aurore, L', 170
 Avellan, Admiral, 146

B

- Baïhaut, 138, 141
 Barodet, Left-wing Radical, 37
 Barras, Paul, 200
 Barrère, Camille, 202
 Barrès, Maurice, 118, 125, 162
 Barthou, Louis, 222, 223
 Bernard, St., 194
 Berteaux, War Minister, 216
 Billot, General, 206
 Bismarck, Otto, Prince Von, 27, 53, 54, 56, 79, 83, 99, 100, 101, 103, 109
 Blanc, Louis, 28, 63, 210
 Bonaparte, Louis Napoleon, 17, 19, 20, 25, 50, 113 (*see* Napoleon III)
 Bonaparte, Pierre, 223
 Bossuet, Jacques, 194
 Boulanger, General, 83, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101; 102-121; 122, 123, 124, 125, 127, 135, 141, 143, 178
 Bourgeois, Léon, 157, 158, 159, 193
 Brazza, Savorgnan de, 217
 Briand, Aristide, 154, 208, 213, 214, 215, 216, 221, 222, 223, 229, 230, 237, 245

- Brisson, Eugène, 28, 96, 138, 143, 153, 154, 173, 174, 193, 200
 Broglie, Duc de, 58, 59, 62, 64, 65, 67, 83, 96
 Buffet, André, 37, 57, 187

C

- Caffarel, General, 108
 Caillaux, Joseph, 190, 216, 217, 218, 223, 231, 233, 234
 Caillaux, Madame, 223
 Calmette, Gaston, 223
 Cambon, Jules, 202, 217
 Cambon, Paul, 202
 Camélinat, French Socialist, 110
 Camponon, General, 97, 106
 Cantagrel, French Socialist, 23
 Carnot, Lazare, 111
 Carnot, Sadi, 111, 112, 114, 116, 117, 125, 129, 131, 140; 150-153; 245
 Caserio, the anarchist, 150
 Cassagnac, Paul de, 59
 Cavaignac, Godefroy, 138, 172, 173, 174
 Challemel-Lacour, 89, 93
 Chambord, Comte de, 38, 39, 40, 42, 44, 67
 Chanoine, General, 174
 Charles X, 38, 44, 63, 77, 92, 247
Châtiments, Les, 118
 Christiani, Baron de, 181
 Clemenceau, Georges, 28, 79, 87, 94, 98, 99, 103, 105, 111, 116, 119, 126, 139, 143, 145, 154, 155, 169, 176, 177, 179, 196, 207; 209-213; 215, 218, 221, 222; 232-235; 237

INDEX

Combarieu, Abel, 206
Combes, Emile, 193; 194-201; 202, 203, 205, 206, 208, 220, 225
Comte, Auguste, 249
Constans, Jean A., 119, 120, 125, 131, 142
Corneille, Pierre, 249
Cuignet, Captain, 173, 174

D

Daumier, H., 81
Decazes, Minister for Foreign Affairs, 53, 54, 57
Delahaye, Jules, 137, 138, 143
Delcassé, Theophile, 189, 194, 197; 201-205; 206, 212, 215
Delescluze, Louis, 28, 30
Déroulède, Paul, 83, 113, 127, 179, 180, 187, 202
Deschanel, Paul, 235, 238
Dietz, Jean, 151
Dillon, A., 120
Dombrowski, 30
Doumer, Paul, 158, 200, 207, 245
Doumergue, Gaston, 223, 239, 242, 244, 245, 248
Dreyfus, Captain Alfred, 155; 162-186; 199, 201, 210
Dreyfus, Mathieu, 161, 169
Dufaure, Jules, 57, 61, 68, 71, 75
Dugenne, General, 93
Dupuy, Charles, 142, 143, 146, 147, 148, 149, 152, 155, 177, 178, 180, 181
Dutrait-Crozon, 164

E

Edward VII, 202, 204, 206
Esterhazy, Commandant, 169, 170, 171, 180, 182
Eudes, 'General,' 110
Eugénie, Empress, 55

F

Fallières, Armand, 207, 209, 218, 220
Fauconnerie, Dugué de la, 135
Faure, Félix, 154, 155, 157, 178, 179

Favre, Jules, 17, 18, 19, 22, 23, 27
Ferré, C. T., 31
Ferry, Jules, 58, 59; 75-80; 85, 86, 88, 90; 93-97; 101, 103, 104, 105, 107; 110-112; 120, 126, 141, 147, 149, 181, 188, 191, 198, 216, 218
Figaro, *Le*, 223
Floquet, Charles T., 28, 63, 74, 79, 114, 115, 116, 119, 139
Fourtou, 64, 96
France, Anatole, 112, 185
Frankfurt, Treaty of, 29, 53, 82, 94, 100, 157
Free Man, 232
Freycinet, Charles Louis de S. de., 75, 80, 83, 86, 97, 98, 99, 100, 102, 106, 119; 126-130; 139, 140, 144, 165, 178, 186, 201

G

Galliéni, General J. S., 203
Gallifet, General de, 181, 184, 189
Gambetta, Léon, 17, 18, 19, 21, 22, 24, 25, 27, 28, 31, 37, 51, 52; 54-56; 58-61; 64, 66, 68; 70-84; 85, 88, 91, 95, 113, 126, 147, 159, 181, 216, 235
George, D. Lloyd, 237
Gérault-Richard, 153
Goblet, René, 102, 103, 142
Grévy, Albert, 138
Grévy, Jules, 28, 37, 42, 49, 58, 59, 66, 67; 70-84; 85, 86, 87, 88, 90, 95, 97; 100-103; 108-112; 114, 116, 119, 128, 129, 140, 147, 150, 153, 198, 207
Guérin, P., 187
Guesde, Jules, 152
Guizot, François, 247

H

Hanotaux, Gabriel, 156, 166, 226
Henri III, 30
Henri IV, 125
Henry, Emile, 148
Henry, Lieutenant-Colonel, 173
Herriot, Edouard, 242, 246

INDEX

Herz, Cornelius, 109, 138, 139, 143
Hôpital, Michel de l', 178
Hugo, Victor, 28
Huss, John, 194

J

Jaurès, Jean, 147, 149, 152, 155, 168,
176, 184, 195, 197, 211, 215, 227
Joffrin, French Socialist, 119
Jonnart, Minister of Public Works,
147, 149
Journal des Débats, 63
Justice, La, 139

K

Kant, Immanuel, 97
Kérauty, de, Chief of Police, 21

L

Labori, counsel for Dreyfus, 199
Lafayette, Marquis de, 81
Lanterne, La, 20
Lavigerie, Cardinal, 130, 131
Lebrun, Albert, 247
Leo XIII, Pope, 131, 181, 193, 197
Léon, Léonie, 83
Lépine, Louis, 107, 115, 117
Lesseps, Charles de, 141
Lesseps, Ferdinand de, 134, 136
Littré, Maximilien, 74
Lockroy, Edouard, 142
Loubet, Emile, 140, 179, 181, 184,
190, 196, 197, 204, 206, 207, 209
Louis XIV, 30, 44
Louis XVIII, 38, 41, 44
Louis-Philippe, 38, 57, 81, 146, 151,
188, 247
Luther, Martin, 194
Lyautey, Marshal, 203

M

Mackau, Baron de, 103
MacMahon, Marie-E.-P.-M., Mar-
shal of France, 38, 42, 44, 45,
48, 56, 57, 61, 62, 65, 67, 68; 71-
75; 81, 96, 110, 123, 153, 155, 179,
238, 239

Make a King, or else—Peace, 226
Malvy, Jean Louis, 234
Man in Fetters, 232
Marcère, de, Catholic Republican,
57, 63
Marchand, Captain, 177, 180
Maurras, Charles, 171, 228
Méline, Jules, 153, 160, 162, 163,
172, 175, 179, 222
Mercier, General, 147
Millaud, Edouard, 102
Millerand, Alexandre, 152, 154, 160,
181, 190, 200, 223, 238, 239
Millière, Revolutionary Republican,
28, 30
Miribel, General de, 80
Mohrenheim, Russian Ambassador,
141
Monaco, Prince of, 197
Mun, Albert de, 144
Mussolini, 83

N

Napoleon I, 92
Napoleon III, 20, 21, 23, 24, 33, 34,
52, 55, 59, 68
Naquet, A. J., 114, 135
Nicholas II, Tsar of Russia, 160, 206
Noir, Victor, 223

O

Ollivier, Emile, 22
Orléans, Duc d', 124, 125

P

Painlevé, Paul, 231, 239
Paléologue, M. G., 205
Palikao, Comte de, 17, 18
Panizzardi, Italian military attaché,
166, 173
Paris, Comte de, 38, 40, 41, 64, 67,
98, 116, 124
Patriots, League of, 83, 117, 127
Péguy, Charles, 162-164
Pelletan, Camille, 194
Périer, Casimir, 146, 147; 149-154
Picard, Ernest, 22

INDEX

- Picquart, Colonel, 169, 173, 175,
178, 210, 213
Piou, Jacques, 131, 144
Pius ix, Pope, 55
Pius x, Pope, 197, 208
Poincaré, Raymond, 142, 209, 215;
218-221; 224; 231-233; 235, 237,
239, 242, 243, 248
Proudhon, Pierre Joseph, 211
Pyat, Felix, 28

Q

- Quinet, Edgar, 28

R

- Ranc, Arthur, 28, 119, 176
Reinach, Baron Jacques de, 136-139;
141
Reinach, Joseph, 164, 175
Rémusat, Charles, 37
Renan, Ernest, 30, 85, 97, 176
Renoult, René, 223
Revoil, Paul, 202
Ribot, Alexandre, 140, 141, 156,
224; 229-231
Rigault, Raoul, 30
Robespierre, Maximilien, 200
Rochebouët, General, 67, 68, 78
Rocheport, Henri, 20, 22, 23, 28, 31,
99, 112, 120
Roget, General, 179
Rouvier, Maurice, 103-105; 119,
138, 139, 195, 200, 201, 204, 205,
207, 216

S

- Sand, George, 25
Sarrien, French Premier, 209, 210
Saussier, General, 97, 128, 166
Say, Léon, 57, 81
Scheurer-Kestner, 28
Schnoebelé, 100
Schwarzkoppen, German military
attaché, 166, 167, 185

- Seignobos, Charles, 193, 219
Sembat, Marcel, 226, 233
Simon, Jules, 42, 61, 62, 77, 87, 244
Sorel, Georges, 164
Spuller, Eugène, 147-149; 213
Stavisky, 246
Strauss, Paul, 98
Syveton, French National deputy,
200

T

- Taine, H. A., 30
Tardieu, André, 205
Temps, Le, 63
Thiébaud, Georges, 114, 118, 119
Thiers, Louis Adolphe, 18, 19; 24-
40; 43, 48, 50-55; 57, 58, 59, 61,
64, 66, 72, 120, 129, 148, 150, 151,
155, 233
Tirard, Pierre, 28, 112, 115
Trarieux, 168
Travail, Confédération Générale du,
191
Trochu, General, 21

V

- Vaillant, Edouard, 148-150
Viviani, René, 224, 229

W

- Waddington, W. H., 75
Waldeck-Rousseau, Pierre, 181, 182,
184; 187-193; 195, 199, 200, 202,
203, 205, 206, 211, 220, 224, 238
Weiss, Jean-Jacques, 38, 80
William II, Emperor of Germany.
166, 204, 215, 224
Wilson, Daniel, 102, 108, 109, 112,
140, 143

Z

- Zola, Emile, 170, 185, 212

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